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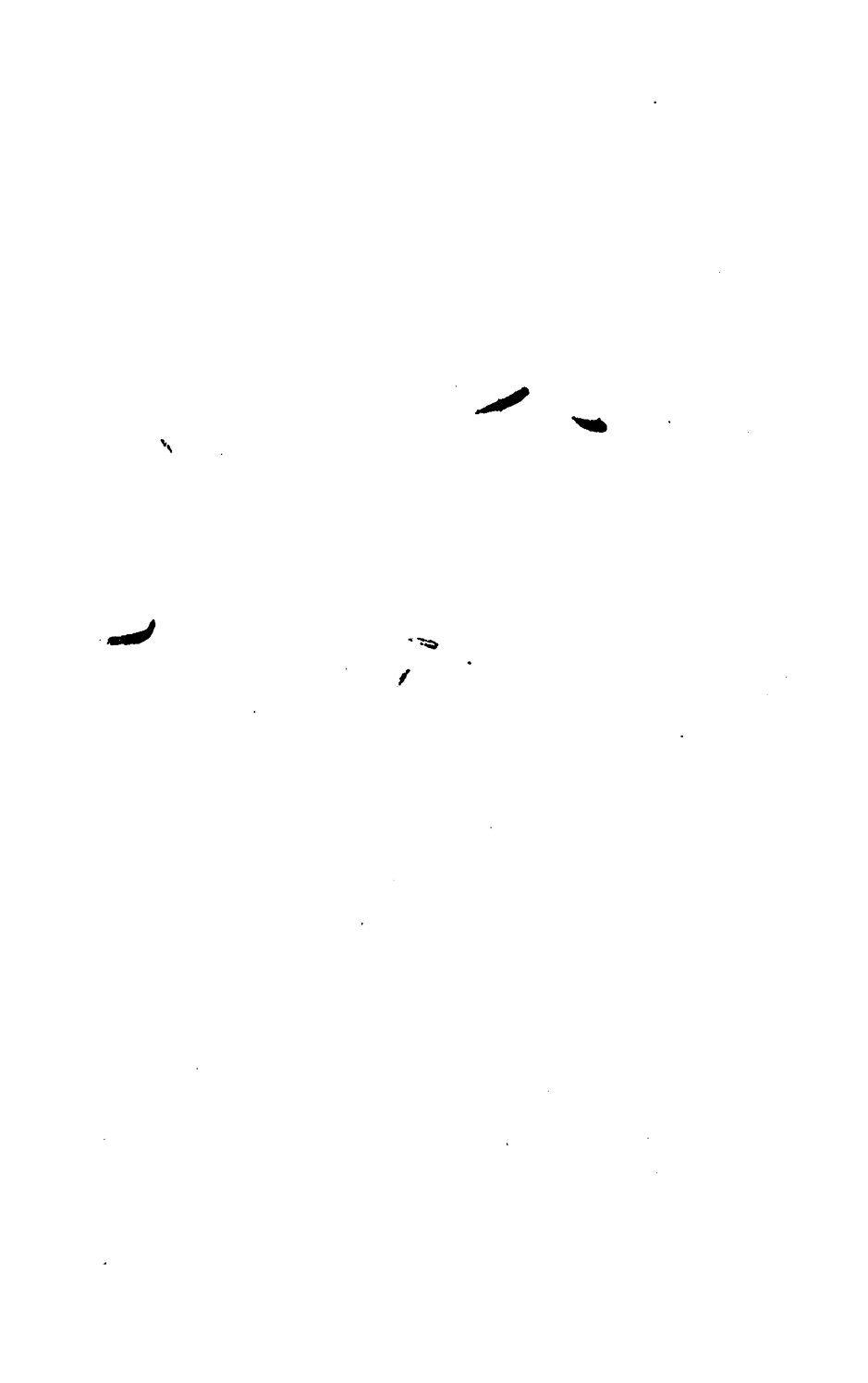
Yours Sincerely.

John A. Joyce

author

Washington D.C.

August 27, 1910.





ROBERT BURNS

BY

COLONEL JOHN A. JOYCE,

Author of *A Checkered Life*; *Peculiar Poems*; *Zigzag*; *Jewels of Memory*;
Complete Poems; *Oliver Goldsmith*; *Edgar Allan Poe*; *Brickbats*
and *Bouquets*; *Beautiful Washington*; *Personal*
Recollections of Shakespeare; *Truth*
and *Robert Burns*.

The poet is the philosopher and prophet of truth.
—Joyce.

FIRST EDITION.

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DEDICATION.

I dedicate this book to the honest heart and soul of the Reader who has loved, sinned and suffered, and only remembers the beautiful things in life!

J. A. J.



PREFACE.

The Poetic life of Robert Burns belongs to the whole world, for his nature was as boundless and brilliant as the stars and the sorrow and disappointment that filled his earthly career find a forgiving sympathy in the hearts of mankind.

I take the liberty of translating the vernacular of the Celtic dialect found in the poems of the Bard into plain English, which has never before been done, and endeavor to retain his intention and sense, at the technical expense of the rhyme.

This contribution to literature is a rambling, truthful, eloquent lecture upon the salient points in the personal and poetical life of Burns.

J. A. J.

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INTRODUCTION.

Burns in many respects was the most remarkable literary philosopher of the eighteenth century.

He sprung from the sour soil of Scotland, where sand, thistle, heather and rustic brawling streams were his close companions.

In mind and body Dame Nature made Burns great, and his keen, elemental love of liberty came from the brains of his Celtic ancestors.


The clods of the valley, the flowers of the fields, the trees, rocks, rivers, lakes, hills and mountains, spoke to his soul in zephyr or stormy language and glorified all he wrote with the true and everlasting stamp of honest nature!

Burns had a magical and mystical memory, brilliant with the coruscations of his sparkling soul, lighting up even his midnights of poverty with the glare of promised pleasure. He was ever roasting on the griddle of expectation instead of resting on the rocking chair of realization!

I do not know of any poet in either ancient or modern times that can be truthfully compared with Burns, as he occupies a whole class himself and fills the bill in his own way!

Homer, Horace, Dante, Petrarch, Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, Goldsmith and Hugo had many advantages of school and social education that never fell to the lot of Burns.

His parents were too poor to give him the advantages of a good country or town school, or the benefit of a classical college education.



William Burns, the father, and Agnes Burns, the mother, taught their first born, Robert, the moral lessons of the old family Bible and the puritanical creed of Knox and Calvin, who believed that personal grief was the proper way to worship God, frowning constantly at any ebullitions of joy or pleasure among the poor slavery peasantry, who barely existed under the lash of these sacerdotal tyrants!

The only religion and creed that ever entered the heart or soul of Robert Burns was found in the silent and sure teachings of Nature, and not in the dogmas of vain man, where pagan and Christian priests promulgated the eternal fires of damnation to frighten the poor slaves they manipulated for personal pelf and power!

This independence of soul opinion generated a secret enmity against the ploughman-poet by the orthodox clergy and landed aristocrats of Scotland, who were glad in their hearts, that poverty and death ended the career of a man who loved liberty, equality and reason!

The personal prose letters written by Burns the last fifteen years of his life to various men and women, and particularly those to the gentle-woman, Mrs. Dunlop, should have been kept eternally from the eye of the heartless public that delight in the display of "dirty linen" on the clothes-line of their neighbors, but cry and squeel when noticed in their own back yard!

The letters only show blasted hopes, depressing doubts, ruined reason, sudden remorse and the frantic patriotism of an innocent poet, who knew not the practical wiles of the world or the cunning chicanery of the great!

During the last four or five years of his life around Dumfries, the harp strings of his hope were warped and broken, never again to be attuned to the melody of social success or financial fruition.

His tired and broken spirit went out on the sunset beams of the Scotch mountains, and yet the radiance and sound of his native songs shine and ring down the rolling years with a beauty that will never fade, and a glory that will never die!

"Let me write the songs of a country, and I care not who makes her laws!"

The teachers, poets, philosophers and prophets of the world have never been appreciated in their day and age, but on the contrary, when they uttered words of wisdom and performed acts of truth, they were treated to poverty, imprisonment, the stake, the scaffold and crucifixion!

I shall not dwell particularly on the social eccentricity, country courtship and matrimonial venture of Burns, as they have no part in the scope of the intellectuality of a poet, and if any of my readers expect a recitation of scandal remembrance, they can hunt up some hyena author who throws stones at sin and secretly indulges in the human weakness he rebukes!

The true poet, profound or ethereal, is like a wandering spirit, shot out of a celestial orb into a strange planet where his soaring and sensitive nature wears out his weary wings, battling against the sordid creatures that stare in amazement at the brilliant colors of his plumage.

The poet is ever a discerning philosopher, constantly communing with nature, seeing in the flowery fields, roaring forests, dashing cataracts, mountain crags, stormy seas, flashing sun and twinkling stars, emblems of mysterious Omnipotence and sure memorials of the Creator.

The bard emblazons and glorifies the rude materials of life by his burning imagination, and while scattering the sweet flowers of thought, lends a fragrance to sterile nature and spreads a perfume over the cold ashes of remembrance.

The music of the poet's soul is coined into words and phrases of truth and love that out-last pyramids and dynasties, singing mellifluous melodies with the entrancing Muses that ever continue to circle around the Olympian heights of hope, beauty, wisdom and sublimity!

The poet is a rule unto himself and will not be confined by the narrow society laws of a gad-grind, sordid generation. He lives in the land of Bohemia, and while oscillating between Bacchus and Venus, he manages somehow to swing through the world, leaving his volcanic thoughts as sappers and miners of civilization, while his songs shall sound through the rolling ages and irradiate the pathway of millions yet unborn, to a higher and brighter life, where angels ever sing and the light of heaven shines eternal.

The poet, more than any other human being, leads a dual life, and his objective and subjective worlds are largely creations of his own fancy, where the glinting, mysterious inspirations of his celestial soul are phenomenal, hypnotizing mankind with the glittering fruits of his genius.

Some day, the poet is found dead in a little corner of the globe, with his bright wings folded forever, his impulsive warm heart and classic face furrowed with the wrinkles of uncongenial elements that have left him a wreck on the shores of time.

Over the cold ashes of the dead poet the world will gather with mournful mien and sigh at the grave of buried genius.

Yesterday he suffered for sympathy and bread, today a funeral train honors his memory, tomorrow a monument will point posterity to a prodigy of celestial aspirations, whose songs shall warm and thrill the heart of mankind adown the crowding ages!

WHEN I AM DEAD.

When I am dead, let no vain pomp display
A surface sorrow o'er my pulseless clay,
But all the dear old friends I loved in life
May shed a tear, console my child and wife.

When I am dead, let strangers pass me by,
Nor ask a reason for the how or why
That brought my wandering life to praise or shame,
Or marked me for the fading flowers of fame.

When I am dead, the vile assassin tongue
Will try and banish all the lies it flung
And make amends for all its cruel wrong
In fulsome prose and eulogistic song.

When I am dead, what matters to the crowd,
The world will rattle on as long and loud,
And each one in the game of life shall plod
The field to glory and the way to God.

When I am dead, some sage for self-renown
May urn my ashes in some park or town,
And give, when I am cold and lost and dead,
A marble shaft where once I needed bread!

Burns' sensitive soul thought, saw and felt *Poetry*—in the glow of the rising and setting sun, in the harvest moon and sparkling stars flashing through midnight space, in the roar of the stormy, rumbling thunder and zigzag lightning, in the cooling breath of the zephyr, in the murmuring winds of the summer sea, in the roaring ocean and dashing waves against rocky headlands, in the sheen of icy crags pinnacled in sunlit glory, in the morning mist rising over the heather enmeshed in golden beams, in the blush and perfume of the wild rose bediamonded with the dews of the dawn and purity of the

universal daisy, in the trailing morning-glory and clambering vine, in the twinkling, gurgling, brawling brook, and sonorous river, in the day dreams of ambition among the corn-reapers of his native hills, in the shrill whistle of the mountain roebuck, leaping from rock and stream and lake with the music of baying hounds in hot pursuit, in the thrilling tones of wildwood birds glinting and echoing across the changing colors of shimmering rainbows, in the soaring lark and screaming eagle bathing their plumage in the ambient air, in the waving flight of the lone Albatross on tropic seas, in the toddle and laugh of innocent children chasing butterflies over field and lawn, in the flashing eyes, rippling curls, gliding motion and echoing songs of highland lassies, in the rounded and beautiful marble form of the Venus de Medici, in the lovelit grace and beauty of the Virgin Mother and child, in the stalwart and heroic form of the Apollo Belvedere, in the grand cathedral towers and spires pointing to heavenly hope, and the buzzing beatitudes of the circling sensuous Muses forever singing and soaring in the celestial fields of the ploughman poet!

ROBERT BURNS

BIRTH AND BOYHOOD DAYS

Robert Burns was born in a straw-thatched clay cottage, by the banks of the river Doon, in Alloway parish, near the town of Ayr, Scotland, on the 25th of January, 1759, and died in a poverty room in Dumfries, on the 21st of July, 1796.

He was the first child of William Burns and Agnes, his wife, poor, but respectable peasants, who endeavored to eke out a precarious living by gardening the sour and sandy soil of seven acres of rented land, that left them poorer and weaker at the close of the year than the beginning.

William Burns came into Ayrshire from the highlands of Scotland, in search of work when he was nineteen years of age.

His Celtic ancestors had lived in the highlands since the seventh century, under Catholic and Protestant reigns, but were ever infused with the love of liberty and the desire of equality under local and national laws.

The Burns, or Burness family, were descended from the Fogerty family of the county of Tipperary, Ireland, one of the sons—Cumascach—being the brother of Fogharthach, the 157th King of Erin in the year 664.

The mountain and hill men of Ireland, Scotland and Wales, through the middle ages were cut up into family clans and tribes, and from their fastnesses of woods, rocks, lakes and rivers, dictated local government to barons, lords and kings.

These Celtic people spoke the guttural Gaelic language in its primitive tones, and even to this day the mountain Irish and Scotch understand each other.


William Burns and his faithful wife, after the labors of the day, would teach Robert Bible lessons by continual repetition of faith and good works, until at the age of six their precocious son was sent to a small country pay school where he forged forward in learning, and surprised his teacher by his gift of language and memory.

The peasantry of Scotland had very little chance for schooling, and the land-owners and puritanical ministers secretly winked at the continued literary ignorance of their "hewers of wood and drawers of water," that they, the self-elected of God, might keep their earthly and religious dupes under the harrow of body and soul control.

"Robbie," in addition to the solemn teachings of his parents, and the elemental education received from his first teacher—Murdock, imbibed a vast store of superstitious lore from an old witch woman, who lived in the Burns cabin, worked around the cot and farm when she could, and in the gloaming and glare of tallow dips told ghost stories to young Burns, filling his mind from the age of seven to thirteen with fantastic yarns of flitting fairies, brownies, warlocks, spunkies, cantraps, giants, witches, dragons, enchanted castles and towers, that often sent the boy to bed with wonder, delight and consternation.

We can well imagine that these romantic stories of the old woman in the long winter evenings stirred up the latent seed of poetry, philosophy and patriotism within the heart and soul of the boy, Burns, whose broad and deep mind reveled in the beauties of nature.

At the age of thirteen, he was sent for a few months to the parish school of Dalrymple, where he learned the rules of



grammar and began the study of the French language. He had an aching desire for knowledge and borrowed or bought all the extra books he could to read and study at home, even when plodding behind the plough or in the lonely garret hours with flickering light, when wind, rain or snow sifted through the chinks in his cabin.

Burns scraped together quite a country household library, among the books being the Bible, Homer's *Iliad*, translated by Pope, Shakespeare's plays, Locke on the Human Understanding, the works of the poets Allen Ramsey and Robert Ferguson, the *Spectator* and *Edinburgh Review*, and collections of English and Scotch songs.

The material events in the life of Burns with rough food and rough shelter on the farms of Mount Oliphant, Lochlea, in the parish of Tarbolton, Mossgiel and afterwards in Ellisland, on the river Nith, were really insignificant, and would never have been noticed were it not for the divine gift of poetry and philosophy that filled the body and mind of this unfortunate child of song.

His practical, rural life was no more than any other bounding and beaming Scotch "Sandy," who delved among the unproductive acres of thistle and heather land, raising a few bushels of oats, barley, wheat, apples or vegetables to keep the wolf from the door, and spare time enough to court, dance and sing at cross-road ale houses, or spend a Sunday of solemn prayer and repentance at the Kirk, listening to nasal preachers picturing the fires of hell to unconverted sinners!

The smouldering fires of poetry could not long be concealed from the life of Burns, and in his fifteenth year in the harvest time, a rustic maiden who was assisting the binders in the field of his father, inspired this first poem of the natural bard, which I translate for the delectation of the plain reader:

ROBERT BURNS

HANDSOME NELL.

O, once I loved a bonnie lass,
And still I love her well,
And while sweet virtue warms my breast
I'll love my handsome Nell.

Bright bonnie lasses I have seen
And few without a flaw,
But for a modest, graceful mien
Her like I never saw.

A bonnie lass, I will confess,
Is pleasant still to see,
But without better qualities
She's not the lass for me.

But Nelly's looks are bright and sweet,
And what is best of all
Her reputation is complete
With form so fair and tall.

She dresses ever clean and neat,
As decent as a belle,
And there is something in her gait
Makes any dress look well.

A gaudy dress and gentle air
May slightly touch the heart,
But innocence and modesty
Are more than polished art.

'Tis this in Nelly pleases me,
'Tis this enchants my soul,
For absolutely in my breast
She reigns without control!

I do not know what other critics think of this simple poem from the heart and brain of an earnest country boy to his rustic sweetheart, but I think it is very good for the first dawning of love's young dream, and bears within itself the elements of truth and morality, and gave to the discerning world the promise of a great thinker in the love-lit lines of the youth.

Agnes Burns, the mother of "Robbie," was the daughter of an intelligent stone-cutter, who worked at his trade in and around the thriving town of Ayr. She had seven children, two boys and five girls, and as they grew up on the various farms, this woman of strong character endeavored to teach them work, purity and bravery.

She was a helpful housewife, cared for two cows, producing milk, butter and cheese that went to the support of her family. She also worked a vegetable garden, had chickens and eggs and raised pigs for Christmas bacon, and at the same time wove linsey-woolsey and rough flax linen to clothe the family, cooking, cleaning, sweeping, sewing, knitting, mending and washing; enough labor to kill a half dozen modern wives who tire themselves out in shopping away the earnings of the "old man" at the "bargain" counter of monopoly stores!

Robert, being the oldest son, was looked up to, as it were, in the household economy, and from the age of fifteen to twenty-three he was a great physical help to his plodding father who continually struggled to eke out a hap-hazard living from poor, cold, sandy farms, that produced without any cultivation an annual crop of briars, weeds, thistles, worms, bugs and flies!

Every farm move that old William Burns made to extricate himself from accumulating debt, sunk him deeper in the mire of legal and financial obligation, until he finally

gave up the ghost and died of wasting consumption and a tired, broken heart on the 13th of February, 1784.

PROMULGATES A DEBATING CLUB.

While Burns was hard at work on his father's poor farm near the town of Tarbolton, he ever pondered over the delights of literature and sought to advance the education of himself and the neighboring boys of the country and town.

He desired to start a Debating Club, and in the winter of 1780 and 1781, himself and his brother Gilbert, a year younger than the poet, and five other peasants of the neighborhood, formed themselves into a Society for literary, oratorical and social amusement.

The by-laws and regulations of the Club were composed by Burns, and the members were to meet at the public ale house once a week, in the evening after the labor of the day. Subjects were to be chosen and discussed at each meeting by the rival debators taking sides, affirmative and negative. The sum expended for ale at each meeting was not to exceed three pence for each man.

The Club continued for a couple of years and a record of the proceedings was kept in a journal book.

For the benefit of the reader and the social glory of those country peasants, we here produce the curious preamble, constitution and by-laws of the Bachelors' Club of Tarbolton, from the handwriting of Robert Burns:

HISTORY OF THE RISE, PROCEEDINGS AND REGULATIONS OF THE BACHELORS' CLUB.

“Of birth or blood we do not boast,
Nor gentry does our Club afford,
But ploughmen and mechanics we
In Nature's simple dress record.”

As the great end of human society is to become wiser and better, this ought, therefore, to be the principal view of every man in every station of life.

But as experience has taught us that such studies as inform the head and mend the heart, when long continued are apt to exhaust the faculties of the mind, it has been found proper to relieve and unbend the mind by some employment or another, that may be agreeable enough to keep its powers in exercise, but at the same time not so serious as to exhaust them.

And, superadded to this, by far the greater part of mankind are under the necessity of *earning the sustenance of human life by the labors of their bodies*, whereby not only the faculties of the mind, but the nerves and sinews of the body are so fatigued, that it is absolutely necessary to have recourse to some amusement or diversion to relieve the wearied man, worn down with the labors of life.

As the best of things however, have been perverted to the worst of purposes, so, under the pretense of amusement and diversion, men have plunged into all the madness of riot and dissipation, and instead of attending to the grand design of human life, they have begun with extravagance and folly and ended with guilt and wretchedness.

Impressed with these considerations, we, the following lads in the parish of Tarbolton, viz., Hugh Reid, Robert

Burns, Gilbert Burns, Alexander Brown, Walter Mitchell, Thomas Wright and William McGavin, *resolved*, for our mutual entertainment, to unite ourselves into a Club or Society, under such rules and regulations, that while we should forget our cares and labors in mirth and diversion, we might not transgress the bounds of innocence and decorum; and after agreeing on these, and some other regulations, we held our first meeting at Tarbolton, in the ale house of John Richard, upon the evening of the 11th of November, 1780, commonly called Halloweve; and after choosing Robert Burns president for the night, we proceeded to debate on this question:

Suppose a young man, bred a farmer, but without any fortune, has it in his power to marry either of two women, the one a girl of large fortune, but neither handsome in person nor agreeable in conversation, but who can manage the household affairs of a farm well enough, the other a girl every way agreeable in person, conversation and behavior, but without any fortune; which one of them shall he choose?

Finding ourselves very happy in our society, we resolved to continue to meet once a month in the same house, in the way and manner proposed, and shortly thereafter we selected Robert Ritchie for another member.

In May, 1781, we brought in David Siller, a poet, and in June, Adam Jamison, as members. About the beginning of the year 1782, we admitted Matthew Patterson and John Orr, and in June following, we elected James Patterson as a proper brother for such society.

The Club being thus increased, we resolved to meet at Tarbolton on the race night, the July following and have a dance in honor of our Society.

Accordingly we did meet, each one with a partner, and spent the evening in such innocence and merriment, such

cheerfulness and good humor, that every brother will long remember it with pleasure and delight!

RULES AND BY-LAWS TO BE OBSERVED IN THE BACHELORS' CLUB.

1st. The Club shall meet at Tarbolton every fourth Monday night, when a question on any subject shall be proposed, disputed points of religion only excepted, in the manner hereafter directed, which question is to be debated in the Club, each member taking whatever side he thinks proper.

2nd. When the Club is met, the President, or he failing, some one of the members, till he comes, shall take his seat, and the other members shall seat themselves; those who are for one side of the question, on the President's right hand, and those who are for the other side on his left; which of them shall have the right hand is to be determined by the President. The President and four of the members being present, shall have power to transact any ordinary part of the Society's business.

3rd. The Club met and seated, the President shall read the question out of the Club's book of records, which is always to be kept by the President, then the two members nearest the President shall cast lots, who of them shall speak first, and according as the lot shall determine, the member nearest the President on that side shall deliver his opinion, and the member nearest on the other side shall reply to him; then the second member of the side that spoke first; then the second member of the side that spoke second; and so on to the end of the company; but if there be fewer members on the one side than the other, when all the members of the

least side have spoken according to their places, any of them as they please, among themselves, may reply to the remaining members of the opposite side; when both sides have spoken, the President shall give his decision, after which they may go over it a second or more times, and so continue the question.

4th. The Club shall then proceed to the choice of a question for the subject of the next night's meeting. The President shall first propose one, and any other member who chooses may propose more questions; and whatever one of them is most agreeable to the majority of members, shall be the subject of debate next Club night.

5th. The Club shall, lastly, elect a new President; the President shall first name one, then any of the Club may name another, and who ever of them has the majority of votes shall be duly elected; allowing the President the first vote and the casting vote upon a tie, but none other. Then after a general toast to the sweethearts of the Club, the meeting shall be adjourned.

6th. There shall be no private conversation carried on during the time of debate, nor shall any member interrupt another while he is speaking, under the penalty of a reprimand from the President for the first fault, *doubling* his share of the ale house reckoning for the second, *trebling* it for the third, and so on in proportion for every fault, provided always, however, that any member may speak at any time after leave asked, and given by the President. All swearing and profane language and particularly obscene and indecent conversation, is strictly prohibited, under the same penalty, as aforesaid, in the first clause of this article.

7th. No member, on any pretence whatever, shall mention any of the Club's affairs to any other person but a brother member, under the pain of being excluded; and

particularly if any member shall reveal any of the speeches or affairs of the Club, with a view to ridicule, or laugh at any of the rest of the members, he shall be forever excommunicated from the Society; and the rest of the members are desired, as much as possible, to avoid, and have no communication with him as a friend or comrade.

8th. Every member shall attend at the meetings, without he can give a proper excuse for not attending; and it is desired that every one who cannot attend, will send his excuse with some other member; and he who shall be absent three meetings without sending such excuse, shall be summoned to the Club night, when if he fail to appear or send an excuse, shall be dismissed.

9th. The Club shall not consist of more than sixteen members, all bachelors, belonging to the parish of Tarbolton; except a brother member marry, and in that case he may be continued, if the majority of the Club think proper. No person shall be admitted a member of this Society, without a unanimous consent of the Club, and any member may withdraw from the Club altogether, by giving a notice to the President of his departure.

10th. Every man proper for a member of this Society must have a *frank, honest, open heart*, above anything dirty or mean, and must be a professed lover of *one or more* of the female sex!

No haughty, self-conceited person, who looks upon himself as superior to the rest of the Club, and especially no mean-spirited, worldly mortal, whose only will is to keep up money, shall upon any pretence whatever be admitted. In short, the proper person for this Society is a cheerful, honest-hearted lad, who, if he has a *friend that is true*, and a *mistress that is kind*, and as much wealth as genteelly to make both ends meet—is just as happy as this world can make him!

The foregoing constitution and by-laws of the *Bachelors' Club* of Tarbolton are most remarkable in their moral teaching, parliamentary rules and personal qualifications of members.

When we candidly compare the design of this country association, composed of peasant lads and mechanics, with the celebrated Literary Club of London, nearly contemporaneous, led by Dr. Samuel Johnson, Boswell, Burke, Reynolds, Garrick, Beauclerk, Lockhart, Cumberland and Oliver Goldsmith, we need not blush for the rustic philosophy of the debating Society originated and promulgated by Robert Burns.

The fascination and allurements of wine and women were not forgotten by the members of either Club, and while the muses and gods were courted in detail, I can hear exultingly the loud and brazen—

BOAST OF BACCHUS.

I reign over land, I reign over sea,
The proudest of earth I bring to my knee
As weak as a child in the midnight of care:
The prince and the peasant I strip bleak and bare.

A taste of my blood sends a thrill to the heart
And speeds through the soul like a poisonous dart,
While I leave it a wreck of trouble and pain
That never on earth can be perfect again.

The youth in his bloom and the man in his might
I capture by day and I conquer by night,
The maid and the matron respond to my call;
I rule like a tyrant and ride over all.

In the gilded saloon and glittering crowd
I deaden the senses and humble the proud,
And tear from the noble, the good and the great,
The love and devotion of home, church and state.

I blast all the honor that manhood holds dear,
I smile with delight at the sight of a tear,
And laugh in the revel and rout of a night;
My mission on earth is to blur and to blight.

I ruin the homes of the high and the low,
I blast every hope of the friend and the foe,
The world I sear with my blistering breath,
And millions I lead to the portals of death.

In the parlor and dance house I sparkle and roar
Like billows that break on a wild, rocky shore.
I crush every virtue, destroy every truth
That blossoms in beauty or blushes in youth.

My power is mighty for sin and despair;
I crouch like a lion that waits in his lair
To mangle the life of the pure and the brave,
And drag them in sorrow to shame and the grave.

THE MASONIC RECORD OF ROBERT BURNS.

The generic love that Burns bore for fellowship with humanity did not cease with his organization of the Bachelors' Club, but through his own social desire and the suggestive solicitations of prominent Masons at Tarbolton, he made application for the three degrees in the order of Free and Accepted Masons.

On the 4th of July, 1781, he was made an Entered Apprentice, and on the 1st of October following, he became a

Fellow Craft Member, and the same night was raised to the Third or Sublime Degree of a Master Mason in St. David's Lodge, Tarbolton, Scotland.

Burns entered at once into the spirit and philosophy of mystic Masonry, based on truth, love and charity, and particularly the consolidation of the Brotherhood of Man, with pure, divine principles and absolute belief in one eternal God!

No contention about nativity, race, religion, creed, politics, wealth or power ever enters the lodge room of Masonry, and in every civilized land and clime on the globe, Master Masons meet upon the level, act upon the plumb, and part upon the square!

There is no secret body in the world that teaches such beautiful lessons of truth and fidelity in its eloquent and impressive ritual at the altar; and the solemn, mystical obligations, sworn to voluntarily by each and every Brother Mason on bended knees, remain deeply engraved on the heart and soul of the candidate to the last moment of his life!

Burns attended the meetings of the St. David Lodge with great punctuality, offering various resolutions and often acting as secretary, making the minutes of several meetings in his own handwriting yet preserved, and signed his name several times to the official record as Robert *Burness*.

In the years 1783-4, he was elected Deputy Master of the Lodge, and when the Grand Master was not there, Burns always acted in his place, to the great satisfaction of the Brothers present.

When one or more candidates took the Master's Degree, St. David's Lodge gave a supper in his honor, where cakes, ale, wine, whiskey, song; wit and oratory prevailed until midnight; and "Robbie" Burns was the pride and toast of

the evening. He was a natural writer, talker and singer, full of wit and humor when surrounded with social chums, male or female; and if he did occasionally take a drop or two of the spiritual blood of John Barleycorn, in excess of the strict rules of temperance and virtue, he should be excused, for it was unfortunately the habit of his day, in cot, hall and castle, to drink the "jolly boys" under the table, and whistle homeward in the wee small hours of morning!

Every generous heart, subject to mistakes and sin, may exclaim with Alexander Pope:—

Teach me to feel another's woe;
To hide the faults I see;
That mercy I to others show,
That mercy show to me!

Burns was what is commonly called, a "bright" Mason; knew the ritual, like the Lord's prayer, of the three degrees in Blue Lodge Masonry, and delighted to work in any chair of the Lodge when the regular officers were absent.

He was constantly invited to the neighboring Lodges at Ayr, Mauchline, Irvine, Dumfries, Kilmarnock, and even to the Lodges at Glasgow and Edinburgh.

When such men as Professor Stewart, Grand Master Sir James Montgomerie, Rev. James Dalrymple and Sir Gavin Hamilton, visited St. David's Lodge, Burns was put forth as the card of entertainment and not one of these illustrious Masons was his superior in intellect, or the independent brotherhood of square and honest manhood!

During his last years at Lochlea farm, and the four years at Mossgiel, up to the year 1787, Burns, recreated in the Lodges of Masonry, and the constant composition of lyric verse, evolved out of his social environment.

He kept his soul and heart and ear close to the pulsating

breast of old Mother Earth, listening in day dreams to the sweet, small voice of her lullaby song, only imparted to the choice spirits of her fantastic creation.

His luminous eyes kodaked the vernal variety of Nature, and his ready thoughts, words and pen expressed the eloquence of his soul in the truth and beauty of his matchless poetry and universal songs, still echoing his fame along the glittering aisles of the columned years!

The Grand Master of Scotland in Edinburgh, on the 13th of January, 1788, at a banquet of five hundred covers gave this first toast: "Caledonia and Caledonia's Bard," "Brother Burns!" which was received standing, with repeated acclamations.

No greater honor was ever given to any Scotch Mason; and the heart of Robert Burns, that noted night must have felt volcanic thrills of glory!

Kilwinning Lodge of Edinburgh, made him an honorary member, and St. Abbs Chapter of Eyemouth, made him a Royal Arch Mason, all the degrees given in one night!

What a glorious compliment to the Ploughman Bard, who prized the splendid freedom, harmony and manhood of Masonry, in preference to the bitter contention of creeds, churches and ignorant preachers!

During the last five or six years of the life of Burns, at Ellisland farm and Dumfries, he was a periodical attendant at the Lodge in that town, and on the 14th of April, 1796, three months before he died, we hear of his last visit to his dear Masonic Brothers who were the most sincere mourners at his funeral, and his most ardent friends since, to foster his fame as a Mason and his glory as a poet.

He ever met his mystic brothers on the *level*, acted on the *plumb* and parted on the *square*!

The following poem composed in the midst of his matri-

monial eccentricities and troubles with his country sweetheart, when contemplating a forced departure to America, gives the sweet pangs of friendship felt for Masonic fraternity:

THE FAREWELL
TO THE
BRETHREN OF ST. JAMES LODGE, TARBOLTON.

Adieu! a heart warm, fond adieu!
Dear brothers of the *mystic tie*,
Ye favored, ye enlightened few,
Companions of my social joy,
Though I to foreign lands must hie
Pursuing Fortune's slippery play
With melting heart and brimful eye
I'll mind you still though far away.

Oft have I met your social band,
And spent the cheerful, festive night,
Oft honored with supreme command,
Presiding o'er the *Sons of Light*,
And by that *hieroglyphic* bright,
Which none but *Craftsmen* ever saw,
Strong memory on my heart shall write
Those happy scenes when far away.

May freedom, harmony and love
Unite us in the grand design
Beneath the *God* like eye above,
The glorious Architect divine!
That you may keep the unerring line,
Still raising by the plummet's law
Till *order* bright completely shine—
Shall be my prayer when far away.

And *you*, farewell! whose merits claim
Justly that Master's *badge* to wear,
Heaven bless your honored, noble name
To *Masonry* and *Scotia* dear!
A last request permit me here,
When yearly ye assemble gay,
One *round*, I ask it with a tear,
To him, *the Bard that's far away!*

POETIC COMPOSITION. THE COTTER'S SATURDAY NIGHT.

During the long, hard working years that Burns barely existed on the poor farms at Mount Oliphant, Lochlea and Mossgiel, summer and winter, he found sweet consolation in constant communication with the divine Muses.

Whether ploughing, sowing, reaping, singing, dancing, drinking, kissing or embracing the fair lasses of Ayrshire, he thought and wrote poetry and personal letters to various prominent people, and kept ideal memorandum in a private journal, noting the actions of his daily life and the record of his musing productions.

While on the farm at Mossgiel, with his mother, sisters and brother Gilbert, he composed some of his best poetry, and made many friends around the neighboring parishes, among peasants, mechanics, merchants, ministers, lawyers, doctors and the Gentlemen of the Caledonian Hunting Club, who patronized his growing literary fame and assisted by liberal subscription the publication of his First Edition of Poetry at Kilmarnock, in the year 1786:

His star of fame began to rise
Into the blue of heather skies,
And gave to all a great surprise
Of genius lore that never dies!

Oliver Goldsmith and Robert Burns, *Irish* and *Scotch* poets, had the same sympathetic nature, love of home, independent soul, and an honest hatred of tyranny and oppression.

When the life light of Goldsmith at the age of forty-six, was quenched in eternal night or day, amid the roaring haunts of Temple Bar, in London, April 4th, 1784, the dawning glory of the Muse of Burns was being kindled at the winter farm fires, in his sixteenth year.

The ploughman poet had already pondered on the liquid melody of the Irish bard, and even memorized the great home patriotic poem, "The Deserted Village," which lays bare the iniquity of tyrant landlords and royal oppressors.

Goldsmith was the favorite poet of Robert Burns, and many thoughts and quotations from the classic pen of the great Irish philosopher were unconsciously used in the best verses and poems of the Scotch bard:

Great hearts and souls must think alike
In every land and clime,
And glorify each other
Adown the aisles of time!

A close analysis of the best poem of Burns, a home epic in original verse—*The Cotter's Saturday Night*—composed in 1785, will reveal the home-love and patriotic pen pictures of Goldsmith.

In the poem—*Halloween*, where Burns describes in rollicking verse the rural antics of witches, fairies, ghosts and superstitions, in kitchen, hall, garden, street, barn and woods, he uses as a head-line text this heart-felt verse of Goldsmith, taken from *The Deserted Village*:

Yes! let the rich deride, the proud disdain,
The simple pleasures of the lowly train;

To me more dear, congenial to my heart
One native charm than all the gloss of art!

I earnestly advise all students of poetry and philosophy
to read at one sitting *The Deserted Village*, in connection
with—

THE COTTER'S SATURDAY NIGHT.

My loved, my honored, much respected friend!
No mercenary bard his homage pays,
With honest pride I scorn each selfish end;
My dearest meed, a friend's esteem and praise;
To you I sing, in simple Scottish lays
The lowly train in life's sequestered scene,
The native feeling strong, the guileless ways
What Aiken in a cottage would have been
Although his worth unknown, far happier there, I ween.

November chill blows loud with angry sigh,
The shortening winter-day is near a close,
The miry beasts returning from the plough,
The blackening train of crows to their repose,
The toil-worn *cotter* from his labor goes,
This night, his weekly work is at an end,
Collects his spades, his mattox and his hoes,
Hoping the morn in ease and rest to spend,
And homeward o'er the moor his course does bend.

At length his lonely cot appears in view,
Beneath the shelter of an aged tree,
The expectant children, toddling, stagger through
To meet their *Dad* with fluttering noise and glee,
His little cot fire, blinking bonnily,
And his clean hearth-stone, thrifty wife with smile,
The lisping infant pratling on his knee

Now all his weary, carking cares beguile
And makes him quite forget his pains and toil.

By and by the elder children come dropping in
At service out among the farmers round,
Some hold the plough, some herd, some heed and run
A dexterous errand to some neighboring town;
Their oldest hope, their *Jennie*, woman grown,
In youthful bloom, love sparkling in her eye
Comes home perhaps to show a bran new gown
Or deposit her hard won penny-fee,
To help her parents dear, if they in hardship be.

With joy unfeigned, brothers and sisters meet,
And each for others' welfare kindly ask,
The social hours swift winged unnoticed fleet,
Each tells the news that he sees or hears,
The parents partial, eye their hopeful years;
Anticipation forward points the view,
The *mother* with her needle and her shears,
Makes old clothes look almost as well as new,
The *father* mixes well with wisdom due.

The master's and their mistress's command
The youngsters are warned to obey,
And mind their labor with a willing hand
And not though out of sight, trifle or play,
And, O, be sure to fear the Lord alway!
And mind your duty, duly, morn and night,
Lest in temptation's path ye go astray,
Implore His counsel and assisting might
They never seek in vain that sought the right!

But hark! a rap comes gently at the door,
Jennie well knows the meaning of the same,
Tells how a neighbor lad came o'er the moor
To do some errands and convey her home;
The wiley mother sees the conscious flame
Sparkling in *Jennie's* eye and flush her cheek;

With heart struck, anxious care, inquires his name
While Jennie, partly, is afraid to speak,
Well pleased, the mother hears it's no wild rake.

With kindly welcome Jennie brings him in,
A strapping youth; he takes the mother's eye,
Blithe *Jennie* sees the visitor will win,
The father talks of horses, ploughs and cows,
The youngster's artless heart o'erflows with joy,
But very bashful scarce can well behave;
The mother with a woman's wiles can spy
What makes the youth so bashful and so grave
Pleased to think her child respected like the rest.

O happy love! where love like this is found!
O heart felt raptures! bliss beyond compare!
I have paced this weary mortal round,
And sage experience bid me this declare—
"If Heaven a draught of heavenly pleasure spare,
"One cordial in this melancholy vale,
"'Tis when a youthful, loving, modest pair
"In loving arms breathe out the tender tale
"Beneath the milk white thorn that scents the gale!"

Is there in human form that bears a heart—
A wretch! a villain! lost to love and truth!
That can, with studied, sly, ensnaring art
Betray sweet Jennie's unsuspecting youth?
Curse on his purjured arts, dissembling, smooth!
Are honor, virtue, conscience, all exiled,
Is there no pity, no relenting ruth,
Points to the parents fondling o'er their child?
Then paints the ruined maid and their distraction wild?

But now the supper crowns their simple board,
The oatmeal pudding, chief of *Scotia's* food,
The milk their only cow, will now afford,
Beyond the cottage wall, snugly chews her cud,
The dame brings forth in complimentary mood,

To urge the lad her well seasoned cheese to taste,
And oft he's pressed, and oft he calls it good,
The frugal wife, then garrulous will tell
" 'Twas twelve months old, since flax was in the bell."

The cheerful supper done with serious face,
They round the fire form a circle wide;
The sire turns o'er with patriarchal grace,
The big hall Bible, once his father's pride,
His bonnet is reverently laid aside,
And with gray head wearing thin and bare
Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,
He reads a portion with judicious care,
And, "*Let us worship God!*" he says, with solemn air.

They chant their artless notes in simple guise,
They tune their hearts by far the noblest aim,
Perhaps *Dundee's* wild warbling measure raise
Or plaintive *Martyrs*, worthy of the name,
Or noble *Elgin* greets the heavenly flame,
The sweetest far of Scotia's holy lays;
Compared with these *Italian* trills are tame;
The tickled ears no heart-felt raptures raise—
No unison with our *Creator's* praise!

The priest-like father reads the sacred page,
How *Abram* was the friend of God on high
Or *Moses* bade eternal warfare wage
With *Amalek's* ungracious progeny;
Or how the Royal Bard did groan and lie
Beneath the stroke of Heaven's avenging ire,
Or *Job's* pathetic plaint and wailing cry
Or rapt *Isaiah's* wild, seraphic fire,
Or other holy seers that tune the sacred lyre.

Perhaps the *Christian* volume is the theme,
How guileless blood for guilty man was shed,
How He, who bore in Heaven the second name
Had not on earth whereon to lay his head;

How his first followers and servant spread
The precepts sage they wrote to many a land,
How *John*, alone in Patmos banished,
Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand,
And heard great Babylon's doom by Heaven's command.

Then kneeling down to Heaven's eternal king,
The *saint*, the *father* and the *husband* prays,
Hope "springs exulting on triumphant wing,"
And thus they all shall meet in future days,
There ever bask in God created rays,
No more to sigh, or shed the bitter tear,
Together hymning *their Creator's* praise,
In such society, yet still more dear,
While time moves round in an eternal sphere.

Compared with this, how poor Religion's pride,
In all the pomp of method and of art,
When men display to congregations wide
Devotions glaring grace, except the heart!
And God incensed, the pageant will desert
The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole,
But haply, in some *cottage* far apart
May hear, well pleased, the language of the soul
And in His book of life the inmates poor enroll.

Then, homeward all take off their several way,
The youngling cottagers retire to rest,
The parent-pair their secret homage pay,
And proffer up to heaven the warm request
That he who stills the raven's clamorous nest,
And decks the lily fair in flowery pride,
Would in the way His wisdom sees the best
For them, and for their little ones provide,
And in their hearts with grace divine preside.

From scenes like these old *Scotia's* grandeur springs,
And makes her loved at home, revered abroad;
Princes and lords are but the breath of kings,

"*An honest man is the noblest work of God,*"
And certain, in fair virtue's heavenly road
The *cottage* leaves the *palace* far behind,
What is a lordling's pomp! a cumberlous load,
Disguising oft the wretch of human kind,
Studied in arts of hell, in wickedness refined!

O *Scotia!* my dear, my native soil!
For whom my warmest wish to Heaven is sent!
Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil
Be blessed with health and peace and sweet content,
And, O! may Heaven their simple lives prevent
From luxury's contagion, weak and vile,
Then, howe'er *crowns* and *coronets* be rent,
A *virtuous populous* may rise the while
And stand a wall of fire around this Isle!

O *Thou!* who poured the patriotic tide
That stream'd through *Wallace's* undaunted heart,
Who dared to nobly stem tyrannic pride,
Or nobly die, the second glorious part.
The patriot's God, peculiarly *Thou* art,
His friend, inspirer, guardian and reward!
O never, never *Scotia's* realm desert:
But still the *patriot* and the *patriot bard*,
In bright succession raise, her ornament and guard!

AUTOBIOGRAPHY. BURNS ON BURNS.

None of the biographers know the subject they write about better than the man knew himself.

Twenty-seven real books have been composed by various intelligent authors, during the last hundred and fifteen years, relating to the characteristics of Burns, but the following blunt and honest statements by the ploughman bard to Dr. Moore, a noted literary light of London, in a

letter dated at Mauchline, August 2nd, 1786, must be taken for just what they are worth:

He paints himself in colors plain and true,
Disguising nothing from the human view,
For well he thought and ever keenly knew
That honest actions shine as bright as dew!

Sir:—For some months past I have been rambling over the country; but I am now confined with some lingering complaints, originating as I take it, in the stomach. To divert my spirits a little in this miserable fog of ennui, I have taken a whim to give you a history of myself. My name has made some little noise in this country; you have done me the honor to interest yourself very warmly in my behalf; and I think a faithful account of what character of a man I am, and how I came by that character, may perhaps amuse you in an idle moment.

I will give you an honest narrative; though I know it will be often at my own expense; for I assure you, Sir, I have like Solomon, whose character, excepting in the trifling affair of wisdom, I sometimes think I resemble—I have, I say, like him, turned my eyes to behold madness and folly, and like him, too frequently shaken hands with their intoxicating friendship. After you have perused these pages, should you think them trifling and impertinent, I only beg leave to tell you, that the poor author wrote them under some twitching qualms of conscience, arising from suspicion that he was doing what he ought not to do; a predicament he has more than once been in before.

I have not the most distant pretensions to assume that character which the pye-coated guardians of escutcheons call a Gentleman. When at Edinburgh last winter, I got

acquainted in the Herald's office; and looking through that granary of honors, I there found almost every name in the kingdom; but for me,

"My ancient but ignoble blood
Has crept thro' scoundrels ever since the flood."

My father was of the north of Scotland, the son of a farmer, and was thrown by early misfortunes on the world at large; where, after many years' wanderings and sojournings, he picked up a pretty large quantity of observation and experience, to which I am indebted for most of my little pretensions to wisdom. I have met with few who understood men, their manners, and their ways, equal to him; but stubborn, ungainly integrity, and headlong, ungovernable irascibility, are disqualifying circumstances; consequently I was born a very poor man's son. For the first six or seven years of my life, my father was gardener to a worthy gentleman of small estate in the neighborhood of Ayr. Had he continued in that station, I must have marched off to be one of the little underlings about a farm-house; but it was his dearest wish and prayer to have it in his power to keep his children under his own eye till they could discern between good and evil; so with the assistance of his generous master, my father ventured on a small farm on his estate.

At those years I was by no means a favorite with anybody. I was a good deal noted for a retentive memory, a stubborn, sturdy something in my disposition, and an enthusiastic idiot piety. I say idiot piety, because I was then but a child. Though it cost the schoolmaster some thrashings, I made an excellent English scholar; and by the time I was ten or eleven years of age, I was a critic in substantives, verbs, and particles.

In my infant and boyish days too, I owed much to an old

woman who resided in the family, remarkable for her ignorance, credulity and superstition. She had I suppose, the largest collection in the country of tales and songs, concerning devils, ghosts, fairies, brownies, witches, warlocks, spunkies, kelpies, elf-candles, deadlights, wraiths, apparitions, cantraips, giants, enchanted towers, dragons, and other trumpery. This cultivated the latent seeds of poetry; but had so strong an effect on my imagination, that to this hour, in my nocturnal rambles, I sometimes keep a sharp look-out in suspicious places: and though nobody can be more sceptical than I am in such matters, yet it often takes an effort of philosophy to shake off these idle terrors. The earliest composition that I recollect taking pleasure in, was *The Vision of Mirza*, and a hymn of Addison's, beginning, "How are thy servants blest, O Lord!" I particularly remember one-half stanza, which was music to my boyish ear:

"For though on dreadful whirls we hung
High on the broken wave."

I met with these pieces in *Mason's English Collection*, one of my school-books. The two first books I ever read in private, and which gave me more pleasure than any two books I ever read since, were "*The Life of Hannibal*" and the "*History of Sir William Wallace*." Hannibal gave my young ideas such a turn, that I used to strut in raptures up and down after the recruiting drum and bag-pipe, and wish myself tall enough to be a soldier; while the story of Wallace poured a Scottish prejudice into my veins, which will boil along there till the flood-gates of life shut in eternal rest!

Polemical divinity about this time was putting the country half-mad; and I, ambitious of shining in conversation parties on Sundays, between sermons, at funerals, etc., used a few years afterwards, to puzzle Calvinism with so much heat and

indiscretion, that I raised a hue and cry of heresy against me, which has not ceased to this hour!

My vicinity to Ayr was of some advantage to me. My social disposition, when not checked by some modifications of spirited pride, was like our catechism-definition of infinitude, without bounds or limits. I formed several connections with other youngsters who possessed superior advantages, the youngling actors, who were busy in the rehearsal of parts in which they were shortly to appear on the stage of life, where alas I was destined to drudge behind the scenes.

It is not commonly at this green age that our young gentry have a just sense of the immense distance between them and their ragged play-fellows. It takes a few dashes into the world to give the young great man that proper, decent, un-noticing disregard for the poor, insignificant, stupid devils, the mechanics and peasantry around him, who were perhaps born in the same village. My young superiors never insulted the clouterly appearance of my ploughboy carcass, the two extremes of which were often exposed to all the inclemencies of all the seasons. They would give me stray volumes of books; among them even then, I could pick up some observations; and one, whose heart I am sure not even the Munny Begum scenes have tainted, helped me to a little French.

Parting with these my young friends and benefactors as they occasionally went off for the East or West Indies, was often to me a sore affliction; but I was soon called to more serious evils. My father's generous master died; the farm proved a ruinous bargain; and to clinch the misfortune, we fell into the hands of a factor, who sat for the picture I have drawn of one in my Tale of Two Dogs.

My father was advanced in life when he married; I was the eldest of seven children; and he worn out by early hardships, was unfit for labor. My father's spirit was soon irritated,

but not easily broken. There was a freedom in his lease in two years more; and to weather these two years, we re-trenched our expenses.

We lived very poorly; I was a dexterous ploughman, for my age; and the next eldest to me was a brother Gilbert, who could drive the plough very well, and help me to thrash the corn. A novel writer might perhaps have viewed these scenes with some satisfaction; but so did not I; my indignation yet boils at the recollection of the cruel factor's insolent threatening letters, which used to set us all in tears.

This kind of life—the cheerless gloom of a hermit, with the unceasing moil of a galley-slave brought me to my sixteenth year; a little before which period I first committed the sin of Rhyme. You know our country custom of coupling a man and woman together as partners in the labors of harvest. In my fifteenth autumn my partner was a bewitching creature, a year younger than myself.

My scarcity of English denies me the power of doing her justice in that language; but you know the Scottish idiom—she was a bonnie, sweet, sonsie lass. In short she altogether, unwittingly to herself, initiated me in that delicious passion, which in spite of said disappointment, gin-horse prudence, and book-worm philosophy, I hold to be the first of human joys, our dearest blessing here below! How she caught the contagion I cannot tell; you medical people talk much of infection from breathing the same air, the touch, etc.; but I never expressly said I loved her. Indeed, I did not know myself why I liked so much to loiter behind with her, when returning in the evening from our labors; why the tones of her voice made my heart-strings thrill like an Aeolian harp; and particularly why my pulse beat such a furious ratan when I looked and fingered over her little hand to pick out the cruel nettle stings and thistles.

Among her other love-inspiring qualities, she sung sweetly; and it was her favorite reel, to which I attempted giving an embodied vehicle in rhyme. I was not so presumptuous as to imagine that I could make verses like printed ones, composed by men who had Greek and Latin; but my girl sung a song, which was said to be composed by a small country lad's son, on one of his father's maids, with whom he was in love, and I saw no reason why I might not rhyme as well as he, for excepting that he could smear sheep, and cast peats, his father living in the moorlands, he had no more scholarcraft than myself.

Thus with me began love and poetry; which at times have been my only, and till within the last twelve months, have been my highest enjoyment. My father struggled on till he reached the freedom in his lease, when he entered on a larger farm about ten miles farther in the country. The nature of the bargain he made was such as to throw a little ready money into his hands at the commencement of his lease, otherwise the affair would have been impracticable.

For four years we lived comfortably here; but a difference commencing between him and his landlord as to terms, after three years tossing and whirling in the vortex of litigation, my father was just saved from the horrors of a jail by a consumption, which after two years' promises, kindly stepped in and carried him away, to where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.

It is during the time that we lived on this farm, that my little story is most eventful. I was at the beginning of this period, perhaps the most ungainly, awkward boy in the parish—no solitaire was less acquainted with the ways of the world. What I knew of ancient story was gathered from Salmon's and Guthrie's geographical grammars, and the ideas I had formed of modern man-

ners, of literature and criticism, I got from the *Spectator*.

These with Pope's works, some plays of Shakespeare, Tull and Dickson on Agriculture, The Pantheon, Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding, Stackhouse's History of the Bible, Justice's British Gardener's Directory, Bayle's Lectures, Allan Ramsay's Works, Taylor's Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin, a Select Collection of English Songs, and Hervey's Meditation, had formed the whole of my reading. The Collection of Songs was my vade mecum. I pored over them driving my cart or walking to labor, song by song, verse by verse; carefully noting the true, tender or sublime, from affectation and fustian. I am convinced I owe to this practice much of my critic craft, such as it is.

In my seventeenth year, to give my manners a brush, I went to a country dancing school. My father had an unaccountable antipathy against these meetings; and my going was, what to this moment I repent in opposition to his wishes. My father, as I said before, was subject to strong passions; from that instance of disobedience in me he took a sort of dislike to me, which I believe was one cause of the dissipation which marked my succeeding years. I say dissipation, comparatively with the strictness and sobriety, and regularity of presbyterian country life; for though the Will o' Wisp meteors of thoughtless whim were almost the sole lights of my path, yet early ingrained piety and virtue kept me for several years afterwards within the line of innocence.

The great misfortune of my life was to want an aim. I had felt early some stirrings of ambition, but they were the blind gropings of Homer's Cyclop round the walls of his cave. I saw my father's situation entailed on me perpetual labor. The only two openings by which I could enter the temple of Fortune, was the gate of niggardly economy, or the path of little chicaning bargain-making. The first is so contracted

an aperture, I never could squeeze myself into it;—the last I always hated—there was contamination in the very entrance!

Thus abandoned of aim or view in life, with a strong appetite for sociability, as well from native hilarity as from a pride of observation and remark; a constitutional melancholy or hypochondriasm that made me fly from solitude; add to these incentives to social life, my reputation for bookish knowledge, a certain wild, logical talent and a strength of thought, something like the rudiments of good sense; and it will not seem surprising that I was generally a welcome guest where I visited, or any great wonder, that always where two or three met together, there I was among them.

But far beyond all other impulses of my heart, was *un penchant a l'adorable moitié du genre humain*. My heart was completely tender, and was eternally lighted up by some goddess or other; and as in every other warfare in this world, my fortune was various, sometimes I was received with favor and sometimes I was mortified with a repulse.

At the plough, scythe or reaping hook, I feared no competitor, and thus I set absolute want at defiance; and as I never cared farther for my labors than while I was in actual exercise, I spent the evenings in the way after my own heart. A country lad seldom carries on a love-adventure without an assisting confidant. I possessed a curiosity, zeal and intrepid dexterity, that recommended me as a proper second on these occasions; and I dare say, I felt as much pleasure in being in the secret of half the loves of the parish of Tarbolton, as ever did statesman in knowing the intrigues of half the courts of Europe.

The very goose feather in my hand seems to know instinctively the well-worn path of my imagination, the favorite theme of my song; and is with difficulty restrained from

giving you a couple of paragraphs on the love-adventures of my compeers, the humble inmates of the farm-house, and cottage; but the grave sons of science, ambition or avarice, baptize these things by the name of Follies. To the sons and daughters of labor and poverty, they are matters of the most serious nature; to them the ardent hope, the stolen interview, the tender farewell, are the greatest and most delicious parts of their enjoyments.

Another circumstance in my life which made some alterations in my mind and manners, was that I spent my nineteenth summer on a smuggling coast, a good distance from home at a noted school, to learn mensuration, surveying, dialling, etc., in which I made a pretty good progress in the knowledge of mankind. The contraband trade was at that time very successful, and it sometimes happened to me to fall in with those who carried it on. Scenes of swaggering riot and roaring dissipation were till this time new to me; but I was no enemy to social life.

Here, though I learnt to fill my glass, and to mix without fear in a drunken squabble, yet I went on with a high hand with my geometry, till the sun entered Virgo, a month which is always a carnival in my bosom, when a charming *filette* who lived next door to the school overset my trigonometry, and set me off at a tangent from the sphere of my studies. I, however, struggled on with my *sines* and *cosines* for a few days more; but stepping into the garden one charming noon to take the sun's altitude, there I met my angel,

“Like Proserpine gathering flowers,
Herself a fairer flower—”

It was in vain to think of doing any more good at school. The remaining week I staid, I did nothing but craze the faculties of my soul about her, or steal out to meet her; and

the two last nights of my stay in the country, had sleep been a mortal sin, the image of this modest and innocent girl had kept me guiltless.

I returned home very considerably improved. My reading was enlarged with the very important addition of Thomson's and Shenstone's Works; I had seen human nature in a new phasis; and I engaged several of my school-fellows to keep up a literary correspondence with me. This improved me in composition. I had met with a collection of letters by the wits of Queen Anne's reign, and I pored over them most devoutly; I kept copies of any of my own letters that pleased me; and a comparison between them and the composition of most of my correspondents flattered my vanity. I carried this whim so far, that though I had not three farthings' worth of business in the world, yet almost every post brought me as many letters as if I had been a broad plodding son of day-book and ledger.

My life flowed on much in the same course till my twenty-third year. *Vive l'amour, et vive la bagatelle*, were my sole principles of action. The addition of two more authors to my library gave me great pleasure; Sterne and M'Kenzie—Tristram Shandy and The Man of Feeling—were my bosom favorites. Poesy was still a darling walk for my mind; but it was only indulged in according to the humor of the hour. I had usually half a dozen or more pieces on hand; I took up one or other, as it suited the momentary tone of the mind, and dismissed the work as it bordered on fatigue. My passions when once lighted up, raged like so many devils, till they got vent in rhyme, and then the conning over my verses like a spell, soothed all into quiet! None of the rhymes of those days are in print, except Winter, a Dirge, the eldest of my printed pieces; The Death of Poor Mailie, John Barleycorn, and songs first, second and third. Song

second was the ebullition of that passion which ended the fore-mentioned school-business.

My twenty-third year was to me an important era. Partly through whim and partly that I wished to set about doing something in life I joined a flax-dresser in a neighboring town (Irvine) to learn his trade. This was an unlucky affair. My luck and to finish the whole, as we were giving a welcome carousal to the new year, the shop took fire and burnt to ashes; and I was left like a true poet, not worth a sixpence.

I was obliged to give up this scheme; the clouds of misfortune were gathering thick round my father's head, and what was worst of all he was visibly far gone in a consumption; and to crown my distresses, a *belle fille* whom I adored, and who had pledged her soul to meet me in the field of matrimony, jilted me with peculiar circumstances of mortification. The finishing evil that brought up the rear of this infernal file, was my constitutional melancholy being increased to such a degree, that for three months I was in a state of mind scarcely to be envied by the hopeless wretches who have got their mittimus—*Depart from me, ye accursed!*

From this adventure I learned something of a town life; but the principal thing which gave my mind a turn, was a friendship I formed with a young fellow, a very noble character, but a hapless son of misfortune. He was a son of a simple mechanic; but a great man in the neighborhood taking him under his patronage, gave him a genteel education, with a view of bettering his situation in life. The patron dying just as he was ready to launch out into the world, the poor fellow in despair went to sea; where after a variety of good and ill fortune, a little before I was acquainted with him, he had been set on shore by an American privateer on the wild coast of Connaught, stripped of every-

thing. I cannot quit this poor fellow's story without adding, that he is at this time master of a large West-Indiaman belonging to the Thames.

His mind was fraught with independence, magnanimity and every manly virtue. I loved and admired him to a degree of enthusiasm, and of course strove to imitate him. In some measure I succeeded. I had pride before, but he taught it to flow in proper channels. His knowledge of the world was vastly superior to mine, and I was all attention to learn. He was the only man I ever saw who was a greater fool than myself, where woman was the presiding star; but he spoke of illicit love with the levity of a sailor, which hitherto I had regarded with horror.

Here his friendship did me a mischief; and the consequence was, that soon after I resumed the plough, I wrote the Poet's Welcome. My reading only increased while in this town, by two stray volumes of Pamela, and one of Ferdinand Count Fathom, which gave me some idea of novels. Rhyme, except some religious pieces that are in print, I had given up; but meeting with Ferguson's Scottish Poems, I strung anew my wildly sounding lyre with emulating vigor. When my father died, his all went among the hell-hounds that prowl in the kennel of justice; but we made a shift to collect a little money in the family amongst us, with which to keep us together, my brother and I took a neighboring farm. My brother wanted my hair-brained imagination, as well as my social and amorous madness; but in good sense and every sober qualification he was far my superior.

I entered on this farm with a full resolution, come, go to, I will be wise! I read farming books; I calculated crops; I attended markets; and in short, in spite of the devil and the world and the flesh, I believe I should have been a wise

man; but the first year, from unfortunately buying bad seed, the second, from a late harvest, we lost half our crops. This overset all my wisdom, and I returned like a dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire.

I now began to be known in the neighborhood as a maker of rhymes. The first of my poetic offspring that saw the light was a burlesque lamentation on a quarrel between two reverend Calvinists, both of them *dramatis personae* in my Holy fair. I had a notion myself, that the piece had some merit; but to prevent the worst, I gave a copy of it to a friend who was very fond of such things and told him that I could not guess who was the author of it, but that I thought it pretty clever. With a certain description of the clergy, as well as laity, it met with a roar of applause.

Holy Willie's Prayer next made its appearance, and alarmed the kirk-session so much, that they held several meetings to look over their spiritual artillery, if haply any of it might be pointed against profane rhymers. Unluckily for me, my wanderings led me on another side, within point-blank shot of their heaviest metal. This is the unfortunate story that gave rise to my printed poem, *The Lament*. This was a most melancholy affair, which I cannot yet bear to reflect on and had very nearly given me one or two of the principal qualifications for a place among those who have lost the chart, and mistaken the reckoning of Rationality.

I gave up my part of the farm to my brother; in truth it was only nominally mine; and made what little preparation was in my power for Jamaica. But before leaving my native country for ever, I resolved to publish my poems. I weighed my productions as impartially as was in my power; I thought they had merit, and it was a delicious idea that I should be called a clever fellow, even though it should never

reach my ears—a poor negro driver;—or perhaps a victim to that inhospitable clime, and gone to the world of spirits!

I can truly say, that *pauvre inconnu* as I then was, I had pretty nearly as high an idea of myself and of my works as I have at this moment, when the public has decided in their favor. It ever was my opinion that the mistakes and blunders, both in a rational and religious point of view, of which we see thousands daily guilty, are owing to their ignorance of themselves. To know myself had been all along my constant study; I weighed myself alone; I balanced my self with others; I watched every means of information, to see how much ground I occupied as a man and as a poet; I studied assiduously Nature's design in my formation—where the lights and shades in my character were intended. I was pretty confident my poems would meet with some applause; but at the worst, the roar of the Atlantic would deafen the voice of censure, and the novelty of West Indian scenes make me forget neglect. I threw off *six hundred copies*, of which I had got subscriptions for about *three hundred and fifty*. My vanity was highly gratified by the reception I met with from the public; and besides I pocketed all expenses deducted, nearly *twenty pounds*. This sum came very seasonably, as I was thinking of indenting myself for want of money to procure my passage. As soon as I was master of nine guineas, the price of wafting me to the torrid zone, I took a steerage-passage in the first ship that was to sail from the Clyde, for—

“Hungry ruin had me in the wind.”

I had been for some days skulking from covert to covert, under all the terrors of a jail, as some ill-advised people had uncoupled the merciless pack of the law at my heels. I had taken the farewell of my few friends; my chest was on the

road to Greenock; I had composed the last song I should ever measure in Caledonia, "*The Gloomy Night is Gathering Fast*," when a letter from Dr. Blacklock to a friend of mine, overthrew all my schemes, by opening new prospects to my poetic ambition.

The Doctor belonged to a set of critics, for whose applause I had not dared to hope. His opinion that I would meet with encouragement in Edinburgh for a second edition, fired me so much, that away I posted for that city, without a single acquaintance or a single letter of introduction. The baneful star which had so long shed its blasting influence in my zenith, for once made a revolution to the nadir; and a kind Providence placed me under the patronage of one of the noblest men, the Earl of Glencairn.

I need relate no farther. At Edinburgh I was in a new world; I mingled among many classes of men, but all of them new to me, and I was all attention to catch the characters and the manners living as they rise. Whether I have profited, time will show."

Unfortunately in many of the poems and letters of Burns, a vein of complaint, disappointment, grief and remorse are plainly discernible.

Such feelings should not permeate the mind of the true philosopher, who must think and feel with my own poem:—

LOVE AND LAUGHTER.

Laugh, and the world laughs with you;
Weep, and you weep alone;
This grand old earth must borrow its mirth,
It has troubles enough of its own.
Sing, and the hills will answer;
Sigh, it is lost on the air;

The echoes bound to a joyful sound
But shrink from voicing care.

Be glad, and your friends are many;
Be sad, and you lose them all;
There are none to decline your nectared wine,
But alone you must drink life's gall.
There is room in the halls of pleasure
For a long and lordly train,
But one by one we must all file on
Through the narrow aisles of pain.

Feast, and your halls are crowded;
Fast, and the world goes by;
Succeed and give, 'twill help you live;
But no one can help you die.
Rejoice, and men will seek you;
Grieve, and they turn and go—
They want full measure of all your pleasure,
But they do not want your woe!

KILMARNOCK EDITION. PEN PICTURES OF THE
POET.

The Kilmarnock edition in the year 1786, of six hundred copies of the poems of Burns, brought him one hundred dollars profit and relieved his immediate needs.

His matrimonial entanglements with Jean Armour and the enmity of her father had caused many a secret pang of fear and remorse to the sensitive soul of the poet, but he could now see some light through the wilderness of poverty, by a prospective second edition through the suggestion of Dr. Blacklock to the Edinburgh book publisher.

Burns made a number of enemies among the landed aristocrats, and the "Old Lights" of the Presbyterian Kirks,

in siding with the liberal "New Lights," who endeavored to reform the ancient wrongs that had crept into the severe creed of Calvin and Knox—self-constituted tyrants of impudence, bigotry and religious tyranny.

The poet could not see any reason for one or two keen religious fanatics manipulating the minds and bodies of the Scotch people, in the name and by the so-called authority of an unknown God, when these blatant preachers themselves knew no more about the will and power of a Universal Creator than the bug or blind worm they crushed beneath their feet!

Burns constantly felt an envy and even malice against pretending preachers, lords, earls, dukes, princes and kings, wondering why God made these voracious animals to rule over the destinies of mankind, while he, with greater hope, heart and brain was compelled to plough the fields and cleave the woods for a bare physical support!

Hear his bitterness against tyrant man in the poem:

A WINTER NIGHT.

Blow, blow, ye winds, with heavier gusts!
And freeze, thou bitter-biting frost!
Descend, ye chilly, smothering snows!
Not all your rage as now united shows
More hard unkindness, unrelenting,
That heaven lighted man on brother man bestows.

See stern oppression's iron grip
Or mad ambition's gory hand
Sending like blood-hounds from the slip
Woe, want and murder o'er the land!
Even in the peaceful rural vale
Truth weeping tells the mournful tale
How pampered Luxury, Flattery by her side
The parasite empoisoning her ear

With all the servile wretches in the rear—
Look o'er proud property extended wide,
And eyes the simple rustic hind,
Whose toil upholds the glittering show
A creature of another kind
Some coarser substance unrefined
Placed for her lordly use here below!

Oh ye! who sink in beds of down,
Feel not a want but what yourselves create,
Think for a moment on his wretched fate,
Whom friends and fortune quite disown!
Ill-satisfied keen nature's clamorous call,
Stretched on his straw he lays himself to sleep
While through the ragged roof and chinkey wall
Chill o'er his slumbers piles the snowy heap!

Burns was purely a pastoral poet and derived his daily inspiration from the soil and animals of his thistle fields, flowery-dells, heather hills and winding streams.

While his hands and feet toiled in the vale of poverty, his head, heart and soul soared over the rocky crags of his native land, and though the wings of his rural muse had not the strength or lofty flight of Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton or Pope, his common, every day reason and rude morality touches the heart of the plain reader and convinces, that each and all of us are of the earth, earthy!

The rustic obscurity and pelting poverty of the black-eyed Burns was a violent contrast to his intuitive wisdom and soul aspirations, which caused the Kilmarnock edition of his poems to be wonderously praised by his farm companions, and their echo reverberated in the classic halls of Edinburgh University, inducing scholars and philosophers to "mark time" to the poetic melody of the rustic ploughman!

By perusing carefully the poems and personal correspondence of our poet, the discriminating reader may get his soul-

lit autobiography in the unconscious confessions of his personal weakness, anxiety, ambition and nameless despair.

Robert Burns never had a practical business aim in life, and was continually wafted by every breeze like the thistle down of his native wilds, rising and falling in the mysterious daily combination of the rolling universe.

Not one of his numerous biographers has ever entered the rustic sanctuary of his mental afflictions, and while most of the writers of his short and uneventful life were disposed to be friendly, they prominently parade the poet's failings, follies and faults.

Only a Bohemian poet can think and feel for the erratic, volcanic wave of impulsive passion that continually sweeps through the mind of another poet, one who can rise or fall with the intense fluctuations of circumstance and environment, and forget all the failings of his poor human tribe, only remembering the good, kind, true and beautiful in this transient life!

Burns thus made fun of the Country Scotch Camp Meeting in his poem—

THE HOLY FAIR.

My name is *Fun*, my cronie dear,
The nearest friend you have,
And this is *Superstition* here,
And that's *Hypocrisy*;
I'm going to country *Holy Fair*
To spend an hour in chaffing.
If ye go there, ye wrinkled pair,
We'll have some famous laughing,
At them this day!

Hear how the preacher tells of faith
With rattling and with thumping,
How meekly calm, now wild in wrath

He's stamping, and he's jumping!
 His lengthened chin and turned up snout,
 His frightful squeel and gestures,
 Oh! how they fire the heart devout
 Like cantharidian plasters,
 On such a day.

What signifies his brazen shine
 Of moral powers and reason?
 His English style and gesture fine
 Are surely out of season.
 Like *Socrates* or *Antonine*
 Or some old pagan heathen,
 The moral man he does define,
 But never a word of faith in—
 What's right that day!

But the satire contained in *Holy Willie's Prayer* aroused the wrath of the "Old Lights" of the Calvinistic Creed of Scotland, echoing along the church walls of Glasgow, Edinburgh and even to the London temples of religion, placing Burns outside of the pale of sacerdotal forgiveness even to this day. He prods the preachers in this fashion:

HOLY WILLIE'S PRAYER.

But I grow mad at their grimaces,
 Their sighing, canting, pale-proud faces,
 Their three-mile prayers, and half-mile graces,
 Their stretching conscience,
 Whose greed, revenge and pride disgraces
 Worse than their nonsense!

Oh! Pope, had I thy satire's darts
 To give the rascals their deserts
 I'd rip their rotten, hollow hearts,
 And tell aloud—
 Their juggling, hocus-pocus arts
 To cheat the crowd!

God knows I'm not the thing I should be,
Nor am I even the thing I could be,
But twenty times, I rather would be
An atheist clean
Than under gospel colors hid be
Just for a screen!

In spite of crowds, in spite of mobs,
In spite of undermining jobs,
In spite of dark banditti stabs
At worth and merit,
By scoundrels, even with holy robes,
But hellish spirit!

THE ELDER'S HOLY PRAYER.

Lord, bless thy chosen in this place,
For here thou hast a chosen race;
But God confound their stubborn face,
And blast their name,
Who bring thy Elders to disgrace
And public shame.

Lord, hear my earnest cry and prayer
Against the Presbyterians of Ayr;
Thy strong right hand, Lord, let it bear
Upon their heads:
Lord, weigh it down and do not spare
For their mis-deeds.

Lord, in the day of vengeance try him;
Lord, visit them who did employ him,
And pass not in thy mercy by them,
Nor hear their prayer:
But for thy people's sake destroy them,
And do not spare.

But, Lord remember me and mine
With mercies temporal and divine,

That I for gold and grace may shine,
Excell'd by none,
And all the glory shall be thine,
Amen! Amen!

The natural resentment of Burns at the unequal distribution of mental and material favors by Providence is shown in the following verses from the poem—

MAN WAS MADE TO MOURN.

Many and sharp the numerous ills
Inwoven with our frame,
More pointed still we make ourselves,
Regret, remorse and shame,
And man whose heaven-erected face
The smiles of love adorn,
Man's inhumanity to man
Makes countless millions mourn!

If I'm designed yon Lordling's slave—
By Nature's law designed,
Why was an *independent* wish
E'er planted in my mind?
If not, why am I subject to
His cruelty or scorn?
Or why has man the will and power
To make his fellows mourn?

Oh death! the poor man's dearest friend,
The kindest and the best!
Welcome the hour my aged limbs
Are laid with thee at rest!
The great, the wealthy fear thy blow
From pomp and pleasure torn!
But oh! a blessed relief to those
That weary laden mourn!

Burns was a "jolly good fellow" with his village chums, and city admirers, and they saw him in his naked eccentricities and independence, when wit and wine ruled the midnight hour.

The sudden rise of the farmer rhymer to be lauded as the Scottish Bard at Edinburgh in the year 1787, where classical scholars, lords, earls and dukes praised his poetry and person, did not for a wonder, turn topsy-turvy the head of our genius.

In a letter to his literary friend, Dr. Moore, dated the 15th of February, 1787, he pertinently says:—"Mere greatness never embarrassed me. I have nothing to ask from the great and I do not fear their judgment. I scorn the affectation of seeming modesty to cover self-conceit. That I have some merit I do not deny, but I see with frequent wringings of heart, that the *novelty* of my character and the honest natural prejudice of my countrymen have borne me to a height altogether untenable to my abilities!"

Even in the banquet glare of his poetic glory he had "wringings of heart," that when the novelty of his rural rise had worn off, the applauding crowd would leave him to neglect, hunger and poverty. *Sic semper.*

"Bobby" Burns resurrected the ancient Caledonian songs, putting new words to old tunes and new tunes to old words. He caught the poetic inspiration of Ossian, Ramsey and Ferguson and pondered on the patriotic and heroic record of Robert Bruce and William Wallace.

Culloden and Flodden Field were battles of inspiration and glory for the Celtic Bard and he ever despised the Anglo-Saxon tyranny that forced a political union between England and Scotland.

Take the Celtic statesman, warrior, orator and poet—Irish, Scotch and Welsh—out of the Anglo-Saxon history,

and there will be little left of England, but the husk without the corn, the pod without the peas, the stalk without the flax, and the voice without the wit!

The Gaelic dialect of his thistle fields and heather hills he seditiously injected into his poetry, although in his personal correspondence he used plain, plump, English terms, to satirize religious humbugs or lordly tyrants. He never knuckled to wealth and power, and even in the full bloom of his poetic renown at Edinburgh, he maintained his manhood and independence of thought.

The president and professors of the University of Edinburgh, the writers of the great literary Review and the lords, earls and dukes invited him to their banquet board and amid the glare and pomp of castle lights, where youth, beauty and talent prevailed, he was the star of the evening when the first flash of his rural genius irradiated the vales and crags of his native land.

In the days of "Bobby" Burns, and even now, the Scotch and Irish all of the Celtic race, were prone to indulge too much in drinking whiskey, and no people in the world have been desolated by drunkenness and religious fanaticism more than these brilliant people.

The jail, the poor-house, the rack and the stake have been fed by drunkenness and religious bigotry, Protestant and Catholic jailing and burning each other in turn, all on account of their opinion of an Unknown God!

Streams of blood through all the centuries run in the blistering track of the preacher and soldier, and our boasted Christian civilization of to-day is found constructing great guns, swift battleships, air balloons, smokeless powder and dynamite to murder mankind in future wars!

Burns inherited religion from his father and mother and the family reading of the Westminster Catechism and Saint

James Bible, as construed by John Knox, was drilled into the young ploughman with his rustic gruel and oatmeal cakes. Yet his poetic nature secretly revolted at the creeds and conduct of puritan preachers, and he resorted to the fields and flowers and hills and streams and birds and beasts and sun and stars for soul-lit consolation!

Man-made prayers, creeds and bibles were not relished by our poet after the age of sixteen, when he began to think for himself and commune with the unalterable and everlasting principles of Dame Nature.

The "Muses Nine" who sing and circle around the heights of Parnassus are jealous teachers, and no earthly sacerdotal agents are recognized in their splendid realm of imagination and glory! They reign supreme!

These fantastic and romantic Beauties were constantly flirting with the brain of Burns, and whether ploughing among the daisies, or field-mice in his native vales, or sporting at the banquets of scholars and royalty in Edinburgh, the Muse was ever buzzing in his willing ear and dictating everlasting words and tunes to his tender, troubled heart.

A stormy night before he thought to leave Scotland for Jamaica, when flying from the shadow of the marriage laws, he wrote—

THE GLOOMY NIGHT IS GATHERING FAST.

The gloomy night is gathering fast,
Loud roars the wild inconstant blast;
Yon murky cloud is foul with rain,
I see it driving o'er the plain;
The hunter now has left the moor,
The scattered coveys meet secure;
While here I wander, pressed with care,
Along the lonely banks of Ayr.

The Autumn mourns her rip'ning corn,
By early Winter's ravage torn;
Across her placid, azure sky
She sees the scowling tempest fly;
Chill runs my blood to hear it rave—
I think upon the stormy wave,
Where many a danger I must dare,
Far from the bonnie banks of Ayr.

'Tis not the surging billow's roar,
'Tis not that fatal deadly shore;
Though death in ev'ry shape appear,
The wretched have no more to fear!
But round my heart the ties are bound,
That heart transpierced with many a wound:
These bleed afresh, those ties I fear,
To leave the bonnie banks of Ayr.

Farewell old Coila's hills and dales,
Her heathy moors and winding vales;
The scenes where wretched fancy roves,
Pursuing past, unhappy loves!
Farewell, my friends! farewell, my foes!
My peace with these, my love with those—
The bursting tears my heart declare;
Farewell the bonnie banks of Ayr!

EDINBURGH EDITION—ENTERTAINMENTS,
TRAVELS.

The success of the Kilmarnock Edition of Burns gave him some encouragement, and the ready cash began to lift him out of family troubles.

Through the recommendations of Hamilton, Aiken, Dr. Blacklock, Professor Stewart, Dr. Blair, Dr. Mackenzie and the Earl of Glencairn, Mr. Creech, the publisher, was convinced that a new and full edition of the poems of the rustic

ploughman would make a hit and he quickly flung them on the breeze of public opinion, meeting a financial success for himself and the poet.

Robert Burns entered the great city of Edinburgh, in November, 1786; and through a flattering review of his early poems, in the *Lounger* Magazine, that circulated largely among scholars and the rich aristocracy, he jumped into immediate notoriety and fame, as welcome as a painted and laughing clown in a circus, or a decorated Indian Chief from the wilds of America!

The brain philosophy of Burns broke through the barriers of caste and creed and the Edinburgh professors, as well as the lords, earls and dukes, with their be-jeweled ladies, were delighted to have the ploughman poet sit at their banquet boards, or converse on ethical and poetical subjects in their gilded drawing rooms.

He was an intellectual novelty, a tit-bit, or sweet-bread of rural genius, that had never been seen before in Scotland, and was consequently patriotically praised and admired for even his mental and physical eccentricities, but really taken as an amusing and interesting animal for the delectation of lounging aristocracy and egotistical college professors, who endeavored to diagnose and dissect the case as they would a petrified mammoth from the mouth of the low levels of the Lena!

In the year 1787, after the successful issue of the second edition of his poems, he longed for the wilds of the Scotch mountains, streams, lakes, crags and noted castles, and with selected companions made four excursions through the summer and fall into the most noted scenes of the Highlands. But strange to say, the mountain scenery, where he even beheld the sunrise darting over grand Ben Lomond, did not inspire his Muse to compose any lofty or sublime poem on the romantic beauty of his native land.

The scholars and biographers of his day wondered that he did not break into "lofty rhyme" at beholding the heather wilds, dashing falls and splintered crags of Dame Nature.

There is only one explanation: Burns was not built on the lines of a lofty, ethereal, sublime poet, and could not lift himself out of the rude and simple things that grew and ran along the furrows, fields, roads, hills and streams of Ayr and Dumfries!

What a contrast in this respect between Burns and Scott, who uttered in the "Lay of the Last Minstrel" these patriotic and lofty lines to the mountain scenery of Scotland:

O Caledonia! stern and wild,
Meet nurse for a poetic child!
Land of brown heath and shaggy wood,
Land of the mountain and the flood,
Land of my sires! what mortal hand
Can now unite the filial band
That knits me to thy rugged strand?
Still as I view each well known scene,
Think what is now, and what hath been,
Seems as to me, of all bereft,
Sole friends, thy woods and streams are left.

And thus I love them better still,
Even in extremity of ill!
By Yarrow's stream still let me stray,
Though none should guide my feeble way,
Still feel the breeze down Ettrick break,
Although it chilled my withered cheek;
Still lay my head by Tevoit Stone,
Though there forgotten and alone
The Bard may draw his parting groan!

And yet the simple songs of Highland Mary, John Anderson, My Jo, and Afton Waters, will be sung by millions yet

unborn at the fire-side of home and love, when the lofty and sublime lines of Scott, Byron, Milton and Shakespeare are only repeated by the few in rich mansions, or recited through the classic aisles of colleges and universities!

HIGHLAND MARY.

Ye banks and slopes and streams around,
The castle of Montgomery,
Green be your woods and fair your flowers,
Your waters never murky!
There summer first unfolds her robes,
And there the longest tarry,
For there I took the last farewell
Of my sweet Highland Mary.

How sweetly bloomed the gay, green birch,
How rich the hawthorn's blossom,
As underneath their fragrant shade
I clasped her to my bosom!
The golden hours on angel wings
Flew o'er me and my dearie,
For dear to me as light and life
Was my sweet Highland Mary.

With many a vow and locked embrace
Our parting was full tender,
And pledging oft to meet again
We tore ourselves asunder;
But oh! fell death's untimely frost,
That nipt my flower so early!
Now green's the sod and cold the clay
That wraps my Highland Mary.

O pale, pale now, those rosy lips
That oft I kissed so fondly!
And closed her eyes—the sparkling glance
That shone on me so kindly!

And mouldering now in silent dust,
That heart that loved me dearly!
But still within my bosom's care
Shall live my Highland Mary!

JOHN ANDERSON, MY JO.

John Anderson, my dear John
When we were first acquaint
Your locks were like the raven
And you were not a Saint;
Yet now your brow is bald, John,
Your locks are like the snow,
But blessing on your frosty head,
John Anderson, My Jo.

John Anderson, my dear Jo,
We climbed the hill together,
And many a merry day, John,
We had with one another;
Now we must totter down, John,
But hand in hand we'll go
And sleep together at the foot,
John Anderson, my Jo.

AFTON WATER.

Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green Braes,
Flow gently, I'll sing thee a song in thy praise;
My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream,
Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream.

Thou stock-dove whose echo resounds through the glen,
Ye wild whistling blackbirds in yon thorny den,
Thou green-crested lap-wing, thy screaming forbear;
I charge you disturb not my slumbering fair.

How lofty, sweet Afton, thy neighboring hills,
Far marked with the courses of clear winding rills,

There daily I wander as noon rises high,
My flocks and my Mary's sweet cot in my eye.

How pleasant thy banks and green valleys below,
Where wild in the woodlands the primroses blow;
There, oft, as mild evening glows over the lea,
The sweet-scented birch shades my Mary and me.

Thy crystal stream Afton, how lofty it glides,
And winds by the cot where my Mary resides,
How wanton thy waters her snowy feet lave
As gathering sweet flowers she stems thy clear wave.

Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes,
Flow gently, sweet Afton, the theme of my lays,
My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream;
Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream!

During the perambulating escapades of Burns through the Highlands, visiting noted mountains, lakes, rivers, falls, castles, ruined abbeys and hospitable mansions, he pictures thus in a letter, June 28th, 1787, to Mr. Ainslie, a drinking spree and a ludicrous, thrilling horse race, with a native peasant, after a day and night of social debauchery:

"On our return at a Highland gentleman's hospitable mansion, we fell in with a merry party, and danced till the ladies left us, at three in the morning. Our dancing was none of the French or English insipid formal movements; the ladies sung Scotch songs like angels at intervals; then we flew at Bab at the Browster, Tullochgorum, Loch Erroch side, etc., like midges sporting in the sun, or crows prognosticating a storm in a harvest day.

"When the dear lassies left us we ranged round the bowl till the good-fellow hour of six: except a few minutes that we went out to pay our devotions to the glorious lamp of *day* peering over the towering top of Ben Lomond. We all

kneeled; our worthy landlord's son held the bowl; each man a full glass in his hand; and I, as priest, repeated some rhyming nonsense, like Thomas-a-Rhymer's prophecies I suppose. After a small refreshment of the gifts of Somnus, we proceeded to spend the day on Loch Lomond, and reached Dumbarton in the evening. We dined at another good-fellow's house, and consequently pushed the bottle; when we went out to mount our horses we found ourselves "Not very fully but gayly yet." My two friends and I rode soberly down the Loch-side, till up came a Highlandman at a gallop, on a tolerably good horse, but which had never known the ornaments of iron or leather. We scorned to be out-galloped by a Highlandman, so off we started, whip and spur. My companions, though seemingly gayly mounted, fell sadly astern; but my old mare, *Jenny Geddes*, one of the Rosinante family, strained past the Highlandman in spite of all his efforts, with the hair halter; just as I was passing him, Donald wheeled his horse, and threw this rider into a clift hedge, and down came Jenny Geddes over all, and my bardship between her and the Highlandman's horse."

TAM O'SHANTER.

The night drove on with songs and clatter,
And all the ale was growing better,
The land-lady and Tam grew gracious,
With favors secret, sweet and precious,
The Cobbler told his queerest stories,
The landlord's laugh was ready chorus,
The storm without might roar and rustle—
Tam did not mind the storm and whistle!
Care—mad to see a man so happy,
Even drown himself among the nappy!
As bees fly home with loads of treasure
The minutes winged their way with pleasure;

Kings may be blessed, but Tam was glorious,
O'er all the ills of life victorious!
But pleasures are like poppies spread—
You seize the flower, its bloom is shed,
Or like the snowfall in the river—
A moment white, then melts forever!

LEAVING EDINBURGH. ELLISLAND. LETTERS
AND POETRY.

The various flirtations of Burns with the fair sex, in country, town and city, would make a volume, as told in his prose and poetic fulminations, but the best of those fantastic escapades are bad, and therefore partial silence for each party is charity for all!

The mind and body of Burns were balanced on a see-saw when making love professions in verse to the grass-widow, "Clarinda" and Jean Armour, his plighted and honest wife.

The following songs composed in the winter of 1788, when sporting about the "rotten row" of Edinburgh, will show the impartiality of the passion of "Sylvander:"

CLARINDA.

Clarinda, mistress of my soul,
The measured time is run!
The wretch beneath the dreary pole
So marks his latest sun.

To what dark care of frozen night
Shall poor Sylvander hie;
Deprived of thee, his love and light,
The sun of all his joy.

We part, but by these precious drops
That fill thy lovely eyes!
No other light shall guide my steps
Till thy bright beams arise.

She, the fair sun of all her sex,
Has blessed my glorious day;
And shall a glimmering planet fix
My worship to its ray?

I LOVE MY JEAN.

Of all the airs the wind can blow,
I dearly love the west,
For there the bonnie lassie lives,
The lassie I love best:
There wild woods grow and rivers roll,
And many a hill between;
But day and night my fancy's flight
Is ever with my Jean.

I see her in the dewy flowers,
I see her sweet and fair,
I hear her in the tuneful birds,
I hear her charm the air;
There's not a bonnie flower that springs
By fountain, wood or green,
There's not a bonnie bird that sings
But minds me of my Jean!

To the credit of Burns let it be said, that he quickly forgot "Clarinda," and openly married Jean Armour a few months later, and began farm life, in another brave effort to reform the razzle-dazzle conduct of vanished and wasted years.

After spending a second winter in Edinburgh, Burns was convinced that the scholars and aristocracy of the Scotch Capital had given him what is commonly called "The cold shoulder," and he began to look around for some work by which he could make a living.

The plough had been the implement by which he had lived for nearly twenty years, and the potent pen of poetry but a recent means of support.

With three hundred pounds in hand he returned to the shire of Dumfries, and leased a farm of one hundred acres of hill-land from the estate of Lord Dalswinton.

The local name of the farm was Ellisland, situated on the immediate western bank of the romantic river Nith, six miles north of Dumfries.

In December, 1788, Burns brought Jean Armour and his first son to the small farm house he had scarcely finished, and began the life of a country farmer. He had selected Ellisland on account of its romantic situation, ignoring a more fertile farm near by, finding when too late, that gravel, rock, hill, heather and red soil land was not very productive.

While Burns, with the best intention for profit, was ploughing, sowing and reaping his scanty crops, keeping his feet in the furrows, his head in the misty air of the Muses, and his heart responding to the toast of the "lads and lassies" of the Globe Tavern at Dumfries, we can well see that defeat would meet his efforts at Ellisland.

Yoking together poetry and practice in the daily duties of a farm is like hitching an eagle and a horse to a plough, where, between lurching and flying, the mis-mated pair become a successful failure!

After failure in work and crops for three years, Burns was compelled to throw up his lease, and virtually lost the three hundred pounds he put in the poetic speculation of farming in his mind!

With his wife and two small sons, he was finally compelled to seek the position of a common whiskey gauger, through the influence of Mr. Graham of Fintray.

In the fall of 1791, Burns sold out his farm implements

and live-stock, and moved into a small cottage in Dumfries, to continue to fret and gauge whiskey, compose spurt poetry, and write complaining letters to his personal or official friends.

Burns, in a letter to Mrs. Dunlop, uttered the following mournful philosophy on man and religion:

“What is man? To-day, in the luxuriance of health, exulting in the enjoyment of existence; in a few days, perhaps in a few hours, loaded with conscious, painful being, counting the tardy pace of the lingering moments by the repercussions of anguish, and refusing or denied a comforter; day follows night and night comes after day, only to curse him with life which gives him no pleasure; and yet the awful, dark termination of that life is a something at which he recoils!

Can it be possible that when I resign this frail, feverish being, I shall still find myself in conscious existence! When the last gasp of agony has announced that I am no more, to those that knew me, and the few who loved me; when the cold, stiffened, unconscious, ghastly corpse is resigned into the earth, to be the prey of unsightly reptiles, and to be in time a trodden clod, shall I be yet warm in life, seeing and seen, enjoying and enjoyed?

Ye venerable sages and holy priests, is there probability in your conjectures, truth in your stories of another world beyond death; or, are they all alike, *baseless visions and fabricated fables*?

If there is another life, it must be only for the just, the benevolent, the amiable and humane; what a flattering idea then is a world to come! Would to God, I as firmly believed it as I ardently wish it!

Jesus Christ, thou amiablest of characters! I trust thou art no imposter, and that thy revelation of blissful scenes

beyond death and the grave is not one of the many impositions which time after time have been palmed off on credulous mankind!"

Thus, "Bobby" Burns, the ploughman poet, places himself among the great agnostics of all the ages!

Burns was never reconciled to the ways of Providence in creating one class of people to rule another, and was particularly antagonistic to the enforced political Union of Scotland and England.

He says in a letter to Mr. Hill, in March, 1790: I am out of all patience with this vile world for one thing. We are placed here amid so much nakedness and hunger and poverty and want, that we are under a cursed necessity of studying selfishness in order that we may exist. God knows, I am no saint; I have a whole host of follies and sins to answer for, but if I could, I would wipe away all tears from all eyes!

And in a letter to Mrs. Dunlop, April, 1790, he says: You know my national prejudice, I had often read and admired the *Spectator*, *Rambler* and *World*, but with a certain regret that they were so thoroughly and entirely English. Alas! have I often said to myself, what are all the boasted advantages which my country reaps from the Union that can counter-balance the annihilation of her independence and even her very name! I often repeat that couplet of my favorite poet—Goldsmith:

States of native liberty possessed,
Though very poor, may yet be very blessed!

There, crops out the most natural feeling of the Celtic, liberty-loving race, against the domineering tyranny of English monarchy, fostered by lords, earls, dukes and *princes* for selfish and brutal purposes.

The Celt and the Saxon can no more commingle in harmony and peace, than water and oil stick together. An irrepressible conflict is ever working between the sordid and soul nature of these distinctive races.

The body and brain of Burns were formed in the mould of poetic manhood, and his soul-lit thoughts ever shone through his great black eyes and handsome countenance, fascinating every beholder with the magnetism of his honest nature. His voice was soothing and sonorous, his language chaste, various and beautiful, and when he sung his own songs among rural admirers, or city gentry, applause with her garish train echoed his renown. He was eminently patriotic, and even clannish in his love for the vales, hills, mountains, lakes and streams of his native land, and the poetry, that he knew and felt would waft down the ages on wings of glory, was composed in the Celtic or Scotch *brogue*, thus depriving the English of any share in its dialect numbers.

His proud and independent nature could not reconcile the beauty of reason with the beastly actions of royalty, and as he was born and reared among the plain, honest people, he never lent his muse or bent his knee to the so-called aristocracy of monarchy.

He wondered why God made a plain, blunt, honest man a mudsill for the superstructure of rich imbecility and ancestral impudence. The poetic aroma from his soul still spreads over the world like the scent of new-mown hay, and thrills the heart with renewed hope, love and benevolence.

The following strictures against cruel poverty and guilty wealth, in a letter to Mr. Peter Hill, dated January 17, 1791, will show the soul-lit disgust of the honest ploughman against pampered riches and corrupt power:

"Poverty! thou half sister of death, thou cousin-germane

of hell! where shall I find force of execration equal to the amplitude of thy demerits? Oppressed by thee, the venerable, ancient, grown hoary in the practice of virtue, laden with years and wretchedness, implores a little aid to support his existence from a stony-hearted son of Mammon, whose sun of prosperity never knew a cloud, and is by him denied and insulted.

Oppressed by Mammon, the man of sentiment, whose heart glows with independence and melts with sensibility, only pines under the neglect or writhes in bitterness of soul under the contumely of arrogant, unfeeling wealth.

Oppressed by thee, the son of genius, whose ill starred ambition plants him at the tables of the fashionable and polite, must see in suffering silence his remarks neglected and his person despised, while shallow greatness, in his idiot attempts at wit, shall meet with countenance and applause.

Nor is it only the family of worth that has reason to complain of Mammon, the children of folly and vice, though in common with thee, the offspring of evil, smart equally under thy rod. Owing to thee, the man of unfortunate disposition and neglected education is condemned as a fool for his dissipation, despised and shunned as a needy wretch, when his follies as usual bring him to want; and when his unprincipled necessities drive him to dishonest practice, he is abhorred and perishes by the justice of his country.

But far otherwise is the lot of the man of family and fortune. *His* early follies and extravagance are considered spirit and fire, *his* consequent wants are the embarrassments of an honest fellow; and when, to remedy the matter, he has gained a legal commission to plunder distant provinces or massacre peaceful nations, he returns perhaps, laden with the spoils of rapine and murder, lives wicked and respected and dies a saint and a lord! Nay, worst of all, alas, for help-

less woman, the needy prostitute, who has shivered at the corner of the street, waiting to earn the wages of casual prostitution, is left neglected and insulted, ridden down by the chariot wheels of coronated criminals, hurrying on to the guilty assignation; who without the same necessity to plead, riot nightly in the same guilty trade!"

Poverty was an ever present and piercing thorn to the soul of Burns, and he blamed Providence and tyrant man for all the ills of life, not thinking that he, himself, was greatly responsible for his mournful condition.

In a letter to his wealthy friend, Mrs. Graham, he says: "I was born a poor dog, and however I may occasionally pick a better bone, than I used to do, I know I must live and die poor; but I will indulge the flattering faith that my poetry will outlive my poverty!"

Poor fellow, his faith was not misplaced, as his poverty has been forgotten, while his poetry pervades the hearts and souls of mankind and shall shine in a blaze of living glory down the circling centuries.

Through the web and warp of the voluminous personal correspondence of Burns with all kinds of mortals, the scarlet thread of grievance and disappointment was glistening in the garment of his genius—and he seldom thought about laughing away his misery, like poor Goldsmith, who not only laughed at poverty, but played the flute to amuse his rustic admirers in Ireland, France, Germany and Italy.

Drifting between poor farming, gauging and drinking whiskey, Burns kept his mind in a pessimistic cloud of uncertainty, as is here shown in his letter to Mr. Cunningham, June 11, 1791: "God help the children of dependance! Hated and pursued by their enemies, and too often, alas! almost unexceptionally, received by their friends with dis-

respect and reproach, under the thin disguise of cold civility and humiliating advice.

O! to be a sturdy savage stalking in the pride of his independence, amid the solitary wilds of his deserts; rather than in civilized life; helplessly to tremble for a subsistence precarious as the caprice of a fellow creature. Every man has his virtues and no man is without his failings, and curse on that privileged plain dealing of friendship which in the hour of my calamity cannot reach forth the helping hand, without at the same time pointing out those failings, and apportioning them their share in procuring my present distress. My friends, for such the world calls ye, and such ye think yourselves to be, pass by my virtues if you please, but do also spare my follies. I do not want to be independent that I may sin, but I want to be independent in my sinning!"

That is certainly a spurt of somber and cruel philosophy, persisting in folly and indifferent to plain virtue.

In a letter to Mr. Ainslie, poor Burns, in one of his periodical bursts of sorrow and remorse, exclaims: "Can you minister to a mind diseased? Can you, amid the horrors of penitence, regret, remorse, headache, nausea, and all of the rest of the damned hounds of hell, that beset a poor wretch who has been guilty of the sin of drunkenness—can you speak peace to a troubled soul? My wife scolds me! My business torments me, and my sins come staring me in the face—when I tell you even whiskey has lost its power to please, you will guess something of my hell within and all around me! At present, I am but a simple liquor gauger, though the other day I got an appointment to an excise division of six pounds per month, which makes my income, down money, seventy pounds per annum!"

In other words, this poor, impecunious philosophic poet was pampered by the British government by a wandering

rural excise commission that paid him about one dollar per day, on which he was compelled to support a wife and three children!

Every lover of literature, and poetry and genius, is deeply sorry that Burns left behind such personal correspondence as disfigure manhood, and particularly regrets that the letters were published to the world, when his friends should have consigned them to the hungry flames of destruction.

Yet, good and bad, bitter and sweet, virtue and vice, joy and grief and poverty and riches, make up the total sum of mankind, every mortal being tarred with the same big stick of devious destiny!

Burns could not conceal, in his prose or poetry, the envy and malice he secretly entertained for the rich and powerful, and seemed to think that Nature was in constant conspiracy in creating inequalities in brain, blood and fortune!

Instead of being jealous of the able, wealthy and powerful, we should try, by industry, sobriety and shrewdness to "catch on" to the secret of their accumulation of knowledge and wealth and share the generous capital that employs and advances willing and intelligent labor!

Tearing down riches and nobility does not build up ourselves, and the desolation and destruction we secretly or openly advocate, topples over our foolish heads, like the stones of the temple on the carcass of the malicious Samson!

In August, 1793, Burns gives the following impulsive dash of dark opinion to a literary lady about poets and poetry:

"What is said of illustrious descent is, I believe, equally true of a talent for poetry; none ever despised it who had pretensions to it. The fates and characters of the rhyming tribe often employ my thoughts when I am disposed to be melancholy. There is not among all the martyrologies that ever were penned, so rueful a narrative as the lives of the poets.

In the comparative view of wretches, the criterion is not what they are doomed to suffer, but how they are formed to bear. Take a being of our kind, give him a strong imagination and a more delicate sensibility, which between them will ever engender a more ungovernable set of passions than are the usual lot of man, implant in him an irresistible impulse to some idle vagary, such as arranging wild flowers in fantastical nosegays, tracing the grasshopper to his haunt by his chirping song, watching the frisks of the little minnows in the sunny pool, or hunting after the intrigues of butterflies; in short, send him adrift after some pursuit which shall eternally mislead from the paths of lucre, and yet curse him with a keener relish than any man living for the pleasure that lucre can purchase; lastly fill up the measure of his woes by bestowing on him a spurning sense of his own dignity, and you have a created wight nearly as miserable as a poet!

"Bewitching poetry is like the Muse and bewitching woman; she has in all ages been accused of misleading mankind from the councils of wisdom, and the paths of prudence, involving them in difficulties, baiting them with poverty, branding them with infamy and plunging them in the whirling vortex of ruin!"

The material events in the short life of Burns were such as occurred to the common peasantry of Scotland; and were it not for the God-given ideal glory of his rare intellectuality, he would be no more remembered than the rural rustic, lost in the lonely graveyard of his native hills. His heart was ever longing in pure contemplation as exemplified in the old song

MY HEART'S IN THE HIGHLANDS.

My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here,
My heart's in the Highlands a chasing the deer;

Chasing the wild deer and following the roe,
My heart's in the Highlands wherever I go.

Farewell to the Highlands, farewell to the North,
The birth-place of valor, the country of worth,
Wherever I wander, wherever I rove
The hills of the Highlands forever I love.

Farewell to the mountains high covered with snow,
Farewell to the streams and green valleys below;
Farewell to the forests and wild hanging woods—
Farewell to the torrents and loud pouring floods.

My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here,
My heart's in the Highlands, a chasing the deer,
Chasing the wild deer and following the roe;
My heart's in the Highlands wherever I go!

The opinion of Burns on the true standard of manhood is
proudly expressed in his wise poem:

FOR ALL THAT AND ALL THAT.

Who fears for honest poverty
And hangs his head for all that,
The coward slave we pass him by,
We dare be poor for all that,
For all that and all that,
Our toil's obscure and all that;
The rank is but the guinea's stamp;
A man is the gold for all that!

What though on homely fare we dine,
Wear humble gray and all that?
Give fools their silks and knaves their wine,
A man is a man for all that;
For all that and all that,
Their tinsel show and all that;

The honest man, though very poor
Is king of men for all that!

You see a fellow called a Lord,
Who struts and stares and all that;
Thou thousands worship at his word,
He's but a fool for all that,
For all that and all that,
His ribbon, star and all that.
The man of independent mind
Will look and laugh at all that!

A prince can make a belted knight,
A marquis, duke and all that,
But an honest man is above his might,
Good faith a man for all that,
For all that and all that,
Their dignities and all that.
The pith of sense and pride of worth
Are higher ranks than all that!

Then let us pray that come it may,
As come it will for all that,
That sense and worth o'er all the earth
May bear the palm and all that,
For all that and all that;
It's coming yet for all that,
That man to man the world o'er
Shall brothers be for all that!

CLOSING AND CRUEL YEARS. POETRY.

Fate and necessity pushed Burns into the humiliating business of a whiskey inspector and gauger, hunting up distilleries and ale houses, for fifty miles through and around Dumfries.

It was the worst business that a poet could be engaged in, for temptation to drink beset him in every mountain path,

road, street and tavern; and he had not the strength of character to abstain from the allurements of the wine-cup:—

His soul was clean, but his body bent
To the tempter's siren song,
And ever and ever was too weak
To resist the entrancing wrong!

There was a constant war between the spiritual and physical characteristics of Burns, which made him one of the most inconsistent men, leaving even his dearest friend in a vale of uncertainty.

His independent and generous nature led him into all kinds of human society, and while he thought himself cunning and wise, he was easily fooled and bamboozled by sharpers.

Several months before the death of Burns, when badly afflicted with rheumatism, remorse and poverty, the poor fellow uttered to a fine lady this last apology for his drunken conduct at her social board:

“I dare say this is the first epistle you ever received from this nether world!

I write you from the regions of Hell, amid the horrors of the damned.

The time and manner of my leaving your earth, I do not exactly know, as I took my departure in the heat of a fever of intoxication, contracted at your hospitable mansion, but on my arrival here, I was fairly tried and sentenced to endure the purgatorial tortures of this infernal confine for the space of ninety-nine years, eleven months and twenty-nine days, all on account of the impropriety of my conduct yester night under your roof!

Here I am, laid on a bed of pitiless furze, with my aching head reclined on a pillow of ever-piercing thorn, while an infernal tormenter, wrinkled and old and cruel; his name,

I think, is *Recollection*, with a whip of scorpions, forbids me peace, or rest to approach me, and keeps anguish eternally awake!

Still, madam, if I could in any measure be reinstated in the good opinion of the fair circle, whom my conduct last night so much injured, I think it would be an alleviation to my torments. For this reason, I trouble you with this letter.

To the men of the company I make no apology. Your husband, who insisted on my drinking more than I chose, has no right to blame me, and the other gentlemen were partakers of my guilt.

But to you, madam, I have much to apologize. Your good opinion I valued as one of the greatest acquisitions I had made on earth, and I was truly a beast to forfeit it.

To all the ladies present, my humble contrition for my conduct and my petition for their gracious pardon. O, all ye powers of decency and decorum, whisper to them, that my errors, though great, were involuntary—that an intoxicated man is the vilest of beasts!

Regret! Remorse! Shame! ye three hell hounds that ever dog my steps and bay at my heels, spare me, spare me!

And yet, with all this repentance, this rural, wandering adopted child of the Muses, never had the will power to fling away the intoxicating bowl of Bacchus, and trample on the social vipers that stung his beautiful and lofty nature into the perdition of intemperance!"

The patriotism of Burns was the most prominent point in his impulsive character, and no Scotchman ever lived who did so much for the glory of his native land as the ploughman bard.

The last ten years of his life, when not pushed on his farm by poverty, or forced to work as a gauger, for a dollar a day, was spent in collecting, composing, amending or extracting

folk-lore, songs of Caledonia, to be published in the *Musical Museum* of James Johnson, or the *Scotch Melodies* of George Thompson.

He took this searching and patriotic work on himself as a labor of love; and when Thompson sent him some money for some of his best songs, he spurned the pay, and threatened to quit the work if the compiler of the *Scotch Melodies* should ever again dare to offer him any recompense for his labor!

And at this very time he had a wife and three children, puttering along in partial poverty. Such consistency and inconsistency, in thought, word and deed, has seldom been found in other poets, although the whole tribe are erratic, ecstatic, lunatic and impracticable!

The light from the fires of the French Revolution in 1792 and 1793 flashed across the British Channel and illumed not only the liberty-loving people of London, but enthralled the peasantry of Scotland and Ireland with renewed hopes that the destruction of the Bastille in Paris, and the head-chopping of criminal lords, dukes and monarchs, would extirpate from the records of the world these bloody leeches and tigers of ancestral tyranny!

In thinking of this and the loss of the liberty of Scotland, in a stormy highland ramble, Burns impulsively composed this great war song, or the imagined address of Robert Bruce to his troops at the battle of —

BANNOCKBURN.

Scots, who have with Wallace bled,
Scots, whom Bruce has often led,
Welcome to your gory bed,
Or to glorious victory!

Now is the day and now is the hour;
See the front of the battle lower;

See approach proud Edward's power—
Edward! chains and slavery!

Who will be a traitor knave?
Who can fill a coward's grave?
Who so base as be a slave?
Traitor! coward! turn and flee!

Who for Scotland's king and law
Freedom's sword will strongly draw,
Freemen stand or freemen fall,
Caledonia! on with me!

By oppressions, woes and pains!
By your sons in servile chains!
We will train our dearest veins!
But they shall be—shall be free!

Lay the proud usurper low!
Tyrants fall in every foe!
Liberty's in every blow!
Forward! let us do or die!

The Marseilles Hymn and Star Spangled Banner have no loftier lines or appeal to patriotism more than the whirlwind glory of that Scotch War Song!

In the poetry and prose letters of Burns a vein of personal biography may be traced by the keen reader, and while his mind held the aspiring hope of the optimist, his physical and financial fear put him in the ranks of the pessimist.

He seemed to cherish a soul grievance against puritanical religion and wealthy aristocracy that ground the rustic poor under the heel of oppression.

Had Burns endeavored to court the rich and powerful, by incidental flattery, when he was first entertained in Edinburgh, after the Kilmarnock edition of his poems, he might

have soared into the realms of riches and occupied a political position of value. But he could not shake off the Jacobite feeling of his Celtic ancestors, or forget the glory of the House of Stuart, and the heroic renown of William Wallace and Robert Bruce.

The love of generic liberty was ever more dear to the heart of Robert Burns than all the allurements of wealth and worldly station, and like all genuine poets, he thought and spoke and wrote the plain truth, although it interfered with his daily material prosperity.

Burns had no religion like that dictated in the bibles, creeds and prayers of men, but at the fountain head of Dame Nature he knelt and bent his listening ear, to hear the still small voice of Omnipotence speaking through all His magnificent works in earth, sea and sky!

Popes, princes and preachers
Were nothing to men like Burns;
They lived for greed and power,
And lost in their funeral urns;
Pampered and proud for a day,
Pretending to faith and trust,
They toppled and passed away,
To rest in the silent dust!

Burns found his most congenial companions in mice, hares, dogs, pigs, sheep, cows, horses and forest birds, and his heartfelt tribute of poetic praise is given to these various animals, that did not betray his secrets or play the hypocrite in their daily lives!

He could not understand why God had made such an unequal distribution of brains and wealth among the races of mankind, and constantly wondered why lords and kings, with their posterity boobies, should ride in rich carriages,

and wine and dine in grand castles, while he, with mind supreme, should delve and plod in the mud and mire of abject poverty.

Burns is not the only man, through the circling ages, who has wondered at the unequal distribution of the rich gifts of Dame Fortune, or the power and glory she gives to sneaks and tyrants, while the brave and free are often neglected and destroyed.

But had he looked into his mind,
Where centered envy, pride or pelf,
He there might see the primal cause
And find all trouble in himself!

Fate selected Robert Burns as a physical and financial failure, for with headache, fever and rheumatism, he was the constant victim of grief and pain.

But to offset this misfortune, Dame Nature endowed him with the rare and splendid gift of poetry, that cannot be taught in the schools, a glory that money and power cannot buy!

It is doubtful if Burns ever really appreciated the divine gift of the Muses, or thought when he was wasting his hours, days, months and years, around courting cots and sparkling ale houses, that he was dragging in the mire of passion and intemperance the most beautiful and everlasting child of immortality—Poetry!

Yet he could speak of one of God's smallest animals in this human fashion:

But, Mousie in thy little den
In proving *foresight* may be vain
The best laid schemes of *mice* and *men*
Go wrong again,

And leaves us naught but grief and pain
For promised joy.

Still thou art blessed compared with me;
The present only touches thee,
But, oh, I backward cast my eye
On prospects drear,
And forward, though I cannot see,
I guess and fear.

And while Burns could not give correct conduct to himself, he could give keen advice to the world, as these lines bluntly show:

"If you have truthful tale to tell
To any bosom croney,
Keep something ever to yourself
You never tell to any;
Conceal yourself just all you can
From critical dissection,
But peep through every other man
With sharp and sly inspection!"

In ploughing up a "Mountain Daisy," Burns compares its lot with the fallen condition of female virtue and himself:

"There in thy scanty mantle clad,
Thy snowy bosom sunward spread,
Thou lifts thy unassuming head
In humble guise,
But now the plough uptears thy head
And low thou lies!

Such is the fate of artless maid,
Sweet *floweret* of the rural shade,
By love's simplicity betrayed,
And guileless trust,

Till she, like thee, all soiled is laid
Low in the dust!

Such is the fate of simple Bard
On life's rough ocean luckless starred;
Unskillful he to note the card
Of prudent lore,
Till billows rage and gales blow hard
And overwhelm him o'er!"

The love that Burns bears for the flowery fields, rolling hills and winding streams of his native land, is beautifully expressed in—

THE BANKS OF DOON.

"Ye banks and braes of bonnie Doon,
How can ye bloom so fresh and fair?
How can ye chant, ye little birds
And I so weary full of care!
Thou'lt break my heart, sweet warbling bird
That wantons through the flowery thorn
Reminding me of vanished joys,
Departed never to return.

Oft have I roved by bonnie Doon
To see the rose and woodbine twine,
And every bird sang of its love
And fondly so did I of mine.
With light-some heart I plucked a rose
Full sweet upon its thorny tree,
But my false lover stole my rose
And left the stinging thorn with me."

Of all the songs that Burns extracted from the old folk-lore of Caledonia, sung not only by Scotchmen, but by all generous people over the wide world, this is the best and greatest.

AULD LANG SYNE.

(Years of long ago.)

Should old acquaintance be forgot
While waters flash and flow?
Should old acquaintance be forgot
And years of long ago?

CHORUS.

For years of long ago, my dear,
For years of long ago,
We'll take a cup of kindness yet,
For years of long ago.

We two have run about the slopes
And through the daisy's blow,
But we have wandered many a mile
In years of long ago.

We two have paddled in the brook
From morn to evening glow,
But seas between us loudly roared
Through years of long ago.

And here's a hand, my trusty friend,
And thine in it shall grow
To take a right good cheering drink
For years of long ago.

And surely, you'll take your pint mug,
And each without a foe
We'll take a cup of kindness still
To years of long ago!

STATEMENTS OF GILBERT BURNS, JOHN MURDOCK,
SIR WALTER SCOTT AND THOMAS CARLYLE.

The following statements and opinions of Gilbert Burns, the brother of Robert, John Murdock, the poet's school teacher, Walter Scott, who met the bard once, and the blunt praise of the cynic Carlyle, will give the reader an enlarged idea of the greatest song writer ever produced in the highlands or lowlands of Scotland:

Gilbert Burns, in a lengthy letter to Mrs. Dunlop, after the death of his brother, utters the following statements:

"Robert Burns was born on the 25th day of January, 1759, in a small house about two miles from the town of Ayr, and within a few hundred yards of Alloway church, which his poem of Tam o' Shanter has made immortal. The name which the poet modernized into Burns, was originally Burnes, or Burness. The father, William Burnes, was the son of a farmer in Kincardineshire, and had received the education common in Scotland to persons in his condition of life; he could read and write, and had some knowledge of arithmetic.

His family having fallen into reduced circumstances, he was compelled to leave his home in his nineteenth year, and turned his steps towards the south in quest of a livelihood. The same necessity attended his elder brother Robert. I have often heard my father describe the anguish of mind he felt when they parted on the top of a hill on the confines of their native place, each going off his several way in search of new adventures, and scarcely knowing whither he went.

My father undertook to act as a gardener, and shaped his course to Edinburgh, where he wrought hard when he could get work, passing through a variety of difficulties. Still however, he endeavored to spare something for the support

of his aged parents: and I recollect hearing him mention his having sent a bank-note for this purpose, when money of that kind was so scarce in Kincardineshire, that they scarcely knew how to employ it when it arrived.

From Edinburgh, William Burnes passed westward into the county of Ayr, where he engaged himself as a gardener to the Lord of Fairly, with whom he lived two years; then changing his service for that of Crawford of Doonside. At length, being desirous of settling in life, he took a perpetual lease of seven acres of land from Dr. Campbell, physician in Ayr, with the view of commencing nurseryman and public gardener; and having built a house upon it with his own hands, married, in December, 1757, Agnes Brown, the mother of our poet, who still survives. The first fruit of this marriage was Robert, the subject of these memoirs.

Before William Burns had made much progress in preparing his nursery, he was withdrawn from that undertaking by Mr. Ferguson, who purchased the estate of Doonholm, in the immediate neighborhood, and engaged him as his gardener and overseer; and this was his situation when our poet was born. Though in the service of Mr. Ferguson, he lived in his own house, his wife managing her family and her little dairy, which consisted sometimes of two, sometimes of three milk cows; and this state of unambitious content continued till the year 1766.

His son Robert was sent by him, in his sixth year, to a school at Alloway, about a mile distant, taught by a person of the name of Campbell; but this teacher being in a few months appointed master of the workhouse at Ayr, William Burnes, in conjunction with some other heads of families, engaged John Murdoch in his stead. He taught us the English grammar. I was too young to profit much from

his lessons in grammar; but Robert made some proficiency in it—a circumstance of considerable weight in the unfolding of his genius and character; and he soon became remarkable for the fluency and correctness of his expression, and read the few books that came in his way with much pleasure and improvement; for even then he was a reader when he could get a book.

Murdoch, whose library at that time had no great variety in it, lent him *The Life of Hannibal*, which was the first book he read (the school books excepted), and almost the only one he had an opportunity of reading while he was at school: for *The Life of Wallace*, which he classes with it in one of his letters to you, he did not see for some years afterwards, when he borrowed it from the blacksmith who shod our horses.

It appears that William Burnes approved himself greatly in the service of Mr. Ferguson, by his intelligence, industry and integrity. In consequence of this, with a view of promoting his interest, Mr. Ferguson leased him a farm, of which we have the following account:

The farm was upwards of seventy acres, the rent of which was to be forty pounds annually for the first six years, and afterwards forty-five pounds. My father endeavored to sell his lease-hold property, for the purpose of stocking this farm, but at that time was unable, and Mr. Ferguson lent him a hundred pounds for that purpose. He removed to his new situation at Whitsuntide, 1766.

It was, I think, not above two years after this, that Murdoch, our tutor and friend, left this part of the country; and there being no school near us, and our little services being useful on the farm, my father undertook to teach us arithmetic in the winter evenings by candle-light; and in this way my two eldest sisters got all the education they received. I remember a circumstance that happened at this time which

though trifling in itself, is fresh in my memory, and may serve to illustrate the early character of my brother.

Murdoch came to spend a night with us, and to take his leave when he was about to go into Carrick. He brought us, as a present and memorial of him, a small compendium of English Grammar, and the tragedy of Titus Andronicus, and by way of passing the evening, he began to read the play aloud. We were all attention for some time, till presently the whole party was dissolved in tears. A female in the play had her hands chopt off, and her tongue cut out, and then was insultingly desired to call for water to wash her hands. At this, in an agony of distress, we with one voice desired he would read no more. My father observed, that if we would not hear it out, it would be needless to leave the play with us. Robert replied, that if it was left he would burn it. My father was going to chide him for this ungrateful return to his tutor's kindness; but Murdoch interfered, declaring that he liked to see so much sensibility; and he left 'The School for Love,' in its place.

Nothing [continues Gilbert Burns] could be more retired than our general manner of living at Mount Oliphant; we rarely saw anybody but the members of our own family. There were no boys of our own age, or near it, in the neighborhood. Indeed, the greatest part of the land in the vicinity was at that time possessed by shop-keepers, and people of that stamp, who had retired from business, or who kept their farm in the country, at the same time that they followed business in town. My father was for some time almost the only companion we had. He conversed familiarly on all subjects with us, as if we had been men; and was at great pains, while we accompanied him in the labors of the farm, to lead the conversation to such subjects as might tend to increase our knowledge, or confirm us in virtuous habits. He

borrowed Salmon's Geographical Grammar for us, and endeavored to make us acquainted with the situation and history of the different countries in the world.

From a book-society in Ayr, he procured for us the reading of Derham's Physico and Astro-Theology, and Ray's Wisdom of God in the Creation, to give us some idea of astronomy and natural history. Robert read all these books with an avidity and industry scarcely to be equalled. My father had been a subscriber to Stackhouse's History of the Bible, then lately published by James Meuross in Kilmarnock; from this Robert collected a competent knowledge of history; for no book was so voluminous as to slacken his industry, or so antiquated as to damp his researches.

A brother of my mother, who had lived with us some time, and had learned some arithmetic by winter evening's candle, went into a bookseller's shop in Ayr, to purchase The Ready Reckoner or Tradesman's Sure Guide, and a book to teach him to write letters. Luckily, in place of The Complete Letter Writer, he got by mistake a small collection of letters by the most eminent writers, with a few sensible directions for attaining an easy epistolary style. This book was to Robert of the greatest consequence. It inspired him with a strong desire to excel in letter-writing, while it furnished him with models by some of the first writers in our language.

My brother was about thirteen or fourteen, when my father, regretting that we wrote so ill, sent us, week about, during the summer quarter, to the parish school of Dalrymple, which, though between two and three miles distant, was the nearest to us, that we might have an opportunity of remedying this defect. About this time a bookish acquaintance of my father's procured us a reading of two volumes of Richardson's Pamela, which was the first novel we read, and

the only part of Richardson's works my brother was acquainted with till towards the period of his commencing author. Till that time, too, he remained unacquainted with Fielding, with Smollet, two volumes of Ferdinand Count Fathom, and two volumes of Peregrine Pickle excepted, with Hume, with Robertson, and almost all our authors of eminence of later times.

I recollect, indeed, my father borrowed a volume of English history from Mr. Hamilton of Bourtreehill's gardener. It treated of the reign of James the First, and his unfortunate son, Charles, but I do not know who was the author; all that I remember of it is something of Charles's conversation with his children. About this time, Murdoch, our former teacher, after having been in different places in the country, and having taught a school some time in Dumfries, came to be the established teacher of the English language in Ayr, a circumstance of considerable consequence to us. The remembrance of my father's former friendship, and his attachment to my brother, made him do everything in his power for our improvement. He sent us Pope's works, and some other poetry, the first that we had an opportunity of reading, excepting what is contained in *The English Collection*, and in the volume of *The Edinburgh Magazine* for 1772; excepting also, those excellent new songs that are hawked about the country in baskets or exposed on stalls in the streets.

The summer after we had been at Dalrymple school, my father sent Robert to Ayr, to revise his English grammar, with his former teacher. He had been there only one week, when he was obliged to return to assist at the harvest. When the harvest was over, he went back to school, where he remained two weeks; and this completes the account of his school education, excepting one summer quarter, some time

afterwards, that he attended the parish school of Kirk-Oswald, where he lived with a brother of my mother's, to learn surveying.

During the last two weeks that he was with Murdoch, he himself was engaged in learning French, and he communicated the instructions he received to my brother, who, when he returned, brought home with him a French dictionary and grammar, and the *Adventures of Telemachus* in the original. In a little while, by the assistance of these books, he had acquired such a knowledge of the language, as to read and understand any French author in prose. This was considered as a sort of prodigy, and through the medium of Murdoch, procured him the acquaintance of several lads in Ayr, who were at that time gobbling French, and the notice of some families, particularly that of Dr. Malcolm, where a knowledge of French was a recommendation.

Observing the facility with which he had acquired the French language, Mr. Robinson, the established writing-master in Ayr, and Mr. Murdoch's particular friend, having himself acquired a considerable knowledge of the Latin language by his own industry, without ever having learnt it at school, advised Robert to make the same attempt, promising him every assistance in his power. Agreeably to this advice, he purchased *The Rudiments of the Latin Tongue*, but finding this study dry and uninteresting, it was quickly laid aside. He frequently returned to his *Rudiments* on any little chagrin or disappointment, particularly in his love affairs; but the Latin seldom predominated more than a day or two at a time, or a week at most. Observing himself the ridicule that would attach to this sort of conduct if it were known, he made two or three humorous stanzas on the subject, which I cannot now recollect, but they all ended, 'So I'll to my Latin again.'

Thus you see Mr. Murdoch was a principal means of my brother's improvement. Worthy man; though foreign to my present purpose, I cannot take leave of him without tracing his future history. He continued for some years a respected and useful teacher at Ayr, till one evening that he had been overtaken in liquor, he happened to speak somewhat disrespectfully of Dr. Dalrymple, the parish minister, who had not paid him that attention to which he thought himself entitled. In Ayr, he might as well have spoken blasphemy. He found it proper to give up his appointment. He went to London, where he still lives, a private teacher of French. He has been a considerable time married, and keeps a shop of stationery wares.

The father of Dr. Patterson, now physician at Ayr, was I believe, a native of Aberdeenshire, and was one of the established teachers in Ayr, when my father settled in the neighborhood. He early recognized my father as a fellow native of the north of Scotland, and a certain degree of intimacy subsisted between them during Mr. Patterson's life. After his death, his widow, who is a very genteel woman, and of great worth, delighted in doing what she thought her husband would have wished to have done, and assiduously kept up her attentions to all his acquaintance. She kept alive the intimacy with our family, by frequently inviting my father and mother to her house on Sundays, when she met them at church.

When she came to know my brother's passion for books, she kindly offered us the use of her husband's library, and from her we got the Spectator, Pope's Translation of Homer, and several other books that were of use to us. Mount Oliphant, the farm my father possessed in the parish of Ayr, is almost the very poorest soil I know of in a state of cultivation.

To the buffetings of misfortune, we could only oppose hard labor, and the rigid economy. We lived very sparing. For several years butcher's meat was a stranger in the house, while all the members of the family exerted themselves to the utmost of their strength, and rather beyond it, in the labors of the farm. My brother, at the age of thirteen, assisted in thrashing the crop of corn, and at fifteen was the principal laborer on the farm, for we had no hired servant, male or female. The anguish of mind we felt at our tender years, under these straits and difficulties, was very great. To think of our father growing old, broken down with the long continued fatigues of his life, with a wife and five other children, and in a declining state of circumstances, these reflections produced in my brother's mind and mine sensations of the deepest distress. I doubt not but the hard labor and sorrow of this period of his life was in a great measure the cause of that depression of spirits, with which Robert was so often afflicted through his whole life afterwards.

At this time he was almost constantly afflicted in the evenings with a dull head-ache, which at a future period of his life was exchanged for a palpitation of the heart, and a threatening of fainting and suffocation in his bed in the night-time.

By a stipulation in my father's lease, he had a right to throw it up, if he thought proper, at the end of every sixth year. He attempted to fix himself in a better farm at the end of the first six years, but failing in that attempt, he continued where he was for six years more. He then took the farm of Lochlea, of 130 acres, at the rent of twenty shillings an acre, in the parish of Tarbolton, of Mr. ———, then a merchant in Ayr, and now (1797) a merchant of Liverpool. He removed to this farm on Whitsunday, 1777,

and possessed it seven years, and died on the 13th of February, 1784.

The seven years we lived in Tarbolton parish, extending from the seventeenth to the twenty-fourth of my brother's age, were not marked by much literary improvement; but, during this time, the foundation was laid of certain habits in my brother's character, which afterwards became but too prominent, and which malice and envy have taken delight to enlarge on. Though when young he was bashful and awkward in his intercourse with women, yet when he approached manhood, his attachment to their society became very strong, and *he was constantly the victim of some fair enslaver.*

The symptoms of his passion were often such as nearly to equal those of the celebrated Sappho. I never indeed knew that he fainted, sunk and died away; but the agitations of his mind and body exceeded anything of the kind I ever knew in real life. *He had always a particular jealousy of people who were richer than himself, or who had more consequence in life.* His love, therefore, rarely settled on persons of this description. When he selected any one out of the sovereignty of his good pleasure, to whom he should pay his particular attention, she was instantly invested with a sufficient stock of charms, out of a plentiful store of his own imagination; and there was often a great dissimilitude between his fair captivator, as she appeared to others, and as she seemed when invested with the attributes he gave her. One generally reigned paramount in his affections, but as Yorick's affections flowed out toward Madam de L—— at the remise door, while the eternal vows of Eliza were upon him, so Robert was frequently encountering other attractions which formed so many underplots in the drama of his love!

As these connections were governed by the strictest rules

of virtue and modesty, from which he never deviated till he reached his 23rd year, he became anxious to be in a situation to marry. This was not likely to be soon the case while he remained a farmer, as the stocking of a farm required a sum of money he had no probability of being master of for a great while. He began therefore, to think of trying some other line of life. He and I had for several years taken land of my father for the purpose of raising flax on our own account. In the course of selling it, Robert began to think of turning flax-dresser, both as being suitable to his grand view of settling in life, and as subservient to the flax-raising.

He accordingly wrought at the business of a flax-dresser in Irvine for six months, but abandoned it at that period, as neither agreeing with his health nor inclination. In Irvine he had contracted some acquaintance of a freer manner of thinking and living than he had been used to, whose society prepared him for overleaping the bounds of rigid virtue which had hitherto restrained him.

Mr. Hamilton, his friend, advised him to publish his poems in the mean time by subscription, as a likely way of getting a little money, to provide him more liberally in necessaries for Jamaica. Agreeably to this advice, subscription bills were printed immediately, and the printing was commenced at Kilmarnock, his preparations going on at the same time for his voyage. The reception, however, which his poems met with in the world, and the friends they procured him, made him change his resolution of going to Jamaica, and he was advised to go to Edinburgh to publish a second edition. On his return, in happier circumstances, he renewed his connection with Mrs. Burns, and rendered it permanent by a union for life."

Mr. John Murdoch says in a letter to Mr. Joseph Cooper Walker of Dublin:—

“SIR:—I was lately favored with a letter from our worthy friend, the Rev. Wm. Adair, in which he requested me to communicate to you whatever particulars I could recollect concerning Robert Burns, the Ayrshire poet. My business being at present multifarious and harassing, my attention is consequently so much divided, and I am so little in the habit of expressing my thoughts on paper, that at this distance of time I can give but a very imperfect sketch of the early part of the life of that extraordinary genius, with which alone I am acquainted.

William Burns, the father of the poet, was born in the shire of Kincardine, and bred a gardener. He had been settled in Ayrshire ten or twelve years before I knew him, and had been in the service of Mr. Crawford, of Doonside. He was afterwards employed as a gardener and overseer by Provost Ferguson of Doonholm, in the parish of Alloway, which is now united with that of Ayr. In this parish, on the road side, a Scotch mile and a half from the town of Ayr, and half a mile from the bridge of Doon, William Burns took a piece of land, consisting of about seven acres; part of which he laid out in garden ground, and part of which he kept to graze a cow, etc., still continuing in the employ of Provost Ferguson. Upon this little farm was erected an humble dwelling, of which William Burns was the architect. It was, with the exception of a little straw, literally a tabernacle of clay. In this mean cottage, of which I myself was at times an inhabitant, I really believe there dwelt a larger portion of content than in any palace in Europe. The *Cotter's Saturday Night* will give some idea of the temper and manners that prevailed there.

In 1765, about the middle of March, Mr. W. Burns came to Ayr, and sent to the school where I was improving in writing, under my good friend, Mr. Robinson, desiring that

I would come and speak to him at a certain inn, and bring my writing-book with me. This was immediately complied with. Having examined my writing, he was pleased with it and told me that he had received very satisfactory information of Mr. Tennant, the master of the English school, concerning my improvement in English, and his method of teaching. In the month of May following, I was engaged by Mr. Burns, and four of his neighbors, to teach, and accordingly began to teach the little school at Alloway, which was situated a few yards from the argillaceous fabric above mentioned. My five employers undertook to board me by turns, and to make up a certain salary, at the end of the year, provided my quarterly payments from the different pupils did not amount to that sum.


My pupil, Robert Burns, was then between six and seven years of age; his preceptor about eighteen. Robert, and his younger brother, Gilbert, had been grounded a little in English before they were put under my care. They both made a rapid progress in reading, and a tolerable progress in writing. In reading, dividing words into syllables by rule, spelling without book, parsing sentences, etc., Robert and Gilbert were generally at the upper end of the class, even when ranged with boys by far their seniors. The books most commonly used in the school were the spelling book, the New Testament, the Bible, Mason's Collection of Prose and Verse, and Fisher's English Grammar. They committed to memory the hymns, and other poems of that collection, with uncommon facility. This facility was partly owing to the method pursued by their father and me in instructing them, which was, to make them thoroughly acquainted with the meaning of every word in each sentence that was to be committed to memory. By the by, this may be easier done, and at an earlier period than is generally thought. As soon

as they were capable of it, I taught them to turn verse into its natural prose order; sometimes to substitute synonymous expressions for poetical words, and to supply all the ellipses. These, you know, are the means of knowing that the pupil understands his author. These are excellent helps to the arrangement of words in sentences, as well as to a variety of expression.

Gilbert always appeared to me to possess a more lively imagination, and to be more of the wit than Robert. I attempted to teach them a little church-music; here they were left far behind by all the rest of the school. Robert's ear, in particular, was remarkably dull, and his voice untunable. It was long before I could get them to distinguish one tune from another. Robert's countenance was generally grave, and expressive of a serious, contemplative, and thoughtful mind. Gilbert's face said, Mirth, with thee I mean to live; and certainly, if any person who knew the two boys had been asked which of them was most likely to court the muses, he would surely never have guessed that Robert had a propensity of that kind.

In the year 1769, Mr. Burns quitted his mud edifice, and took possession of a farm (Mount Oliphant) of his own improving, while in the service of Provost Ferguson. This farm being at a considerable distance from the school, the boys could not attend regularly; and some changes taking place among the other supporters of the school, I left it, having continued to conduct it for nearly two years and a half.

In the year 1772, I was appointed, being one of the five candidates who were examined, to teach the English school at Ayr; and in 1773, Robert Burns came to board and lodge with me, for the purpose of revising the English grammar, etc., that he might be better qualified to instruct his brothers



and sisters at home. He was now with me day and night in school, at all meals, and in all my walks. At the end of one week, I told him, that as he was now pretty much master of the parts of speech, etc., I should like to teach him something of French pronunciation; that when we should meet with the name of a French town, ship, officer, or the like, in the newspapers, he might be able to pronounce it something like a French word. Robert was glad to hear this proposal, and immediately we attacked the French with great courage.

Now there was little else to be heard but the declension of nouns, the conjugation of verbs, etc. When walking together, and even at meals, I was constantly telling him the names of different objects, as they presented themselves, in French; so that he was hourly laying in a stock of words, and sometimes little phrases. In short, he took such pleasure in learning, and I in teaching, that it was difficult to say which of the two was most zealous in the business; and about the end of the second week of our study of the French, we began to read a little of the *Adventures of Telemachus*, in Fenelon's own words.

But now the plains of Mount Oliphant began to whiten, and Robert was summoned to relinquish the pleasing scenes that surrounded the grotto of Calypso; and armed with a sickle, to seek glory by signalizing himself in the fields of Ceres—and so he did, for although but about fifteen, I was told that he performed the work of a man.

Thus was I deprived of my very apt pupil, and consequently agreeable companion, at the end of three weeks, one of which was spent entirely in the study of English, and the other two chiefly in that of French. I did not however, lose sight of him; but was a frequent visitant at his father's house, when I had my half-holiday; and very often went, accompanied with one or two persons more intelligent than myself,

that good William Burnes might enjoy a mental feast. Then the laboring oar was shifted to some other hand. The father and the son sat down with us, when we enjoyed a conversation, wherein solid reasoning, sensible remark, and a moderate seasoning of jocularly, were so nicely blended as to render it palatable to all parties. Robert had a hundred questions to ask me about the French, etc.; and the father, who had always rational information in view, had still some question to propose to my more learned friends, upon moral or natural philosophy, or some such interesting subject. Mrs. Burnes, too, was of the party as much as possible;

‘But still the house affairs would draw her thence,
Which ever as she could with haste despatch,
She’d come again, and with a greedy ear,
Devour up their discourse,’—

and particularly that of her husband. At all times, and in all companions, she listened to him with a more marked attention than to anybody else. When under the necessity of being absent while he was speaking, she seemed to regret, as a real loss, that she had missed what the good man had said. This worthy woman, Agnes Brown, had the most thorough esteem for her husband of any woman I ever knew. I can by no means wonder that she highly esteemed him; for I myself have always considered William Burnes as by far the best of the human race that ever I had the pleasure of being acquainted with—and many a worthy character I have known. I can cheerfully join with Robert, in the last line of his epitaph borrowed from Goldsmith,

‘And even his failings leaned to virtue’s side.’

He was an excellent husband, if I may judge from his assiduous attention to the ease and comfort of his worthy partner, and from her affectionate behavior to him, as well as her unwearied attention to the duties of a mother.

He was a tender and affectionate father; he took pleasure in leading his children in the path of virtue; not in driving them as some parents do, to the performance of duties to which they themselves are averse. He took care to find fault but very seldom; and therefore, when he did rebuke, he was listened to with a kind of reverential awe. A look of disapprobation was felt; a reproof was severely so; and a stripe with the strap, even on the skirt of the coat, gave heartfelt pain, produced loud lamentation, and brought forth a flood of tears.

He had the art of gaining the esteem and good-will of those that were laborers under him. I think I never saw him angry but twice; the one time it was with the foreman of the band, for not reaping the field as he was desired; and the other time, it was with an old man, for using smutty innuendoes and double entendres. Were every foul-mouthed old man to receive a seasonable check in this way, it would be to the advantage of the rising generation. As he was at no time overbearing to inferiors, he was equally incapable of that passive, pitiful, paltry spirit, that induces some people to keep bowing and bowing in the presence of a great man. He always treated superiors with a becoming respect; but he never gave the smallest encouragement to aristocratical arrogance. But I must not pretend to give you a description of all the manly qualities, the rational and Christian virtues, of the venerable William Burnes. Time would fail me. I shall only add, that he carefully practiced every known duty, and avoided everything that was criminal; or, in the apostle's words, Herein did he exercise himself in living a life void of offence towards God and towards men. O for a world of men of such dispositions! We should then have no wars. I have often wished, for the good of mankind, that it was as customary to honor and perpetuate the mem-

ory of those who excel in moral rectitude, as it is to extol what are called heroic actions; then would the mausoleum of the friend of my youth overtop and surpass most of the monuments I see in Westminster Abbey.

Although I cannot do justice to the character of this worthy man, yet you will perceive from these few particulars what kind of person had the principal hand in the education of our poet. He spoke the English language with more propriety, both with respect to diction and pronunciation, than any man I ever knew with no greater advantages. This had a very good effect on the boys, who began to talk and reason like men, much sooner than their neighbors. I do not recollect any of their contemporaries, at my little seminary, who afterwards made any great figure, as literary characters, except Dr. Tennant, who was chaplain to Colonel Fullarton's regiment, and who is now in the East Indies. He is a man of genius and learning; yet affable, and free from pedantry."

Although Burns was lowly born, yet like the eternal mosses and lichens of his native fields and hills, his poetic glory survived over all adversity.

MOSESSES AND LICHENS.

When the trees and the flowers have departed
The mosses and lichens remain
To shelter the face of our tombstones
And shield them from sun and from rain,
And when the bleak crags of the mountains
Are stripped of their dresses of pines
The mosses and lichens cling closer—
Celestial and glorious signs!

The bright vernal beauty of spring time
With flowers and forests abound

And Dame Nature in autumn entrancing
With fruits of her children around,
Yet seedless and fruitless the mosses
Grow perfect and soft over all,
And lichens with modesty linger
In the silence of summer and fall.

We may learn life's lesson from mosses
And gray lichens creeping so slow
That the truest of friendship is silent
And sticks to us closer in woe,
While the flowers of fame are still fading
And the tall sighing oaks pass away,
But the beautiful mosses and lichens
Shall never decrease nor decay!

Young Walter Scott measures up our remarkable poet at first sight:

"As for Burns, I may truly say, *Virgilium vidi tantum*. I was a lad of fifteen in 1786-7, when he came first to Edinburgh, but had sense and feeling enough to be much interested in his poetry, and would have given the world to know him; but I had very little acquaintance with any literary people, and still less with the gentry of the west country, the two sets that he most frequented. Mr. Thomas Grierson was at that time a clerk of my father's. He knew Burns, and promised to ask him to his lodgings to dinner; but had no opportunity to keep his word; otherwise I might have seen more of this distinguished man. As it was, I saw him one day at the late venerable Professor Ferguson's, where there were several gentlemen of literary reputation, among whom I remembered the celebrated Mr. Dugald Stewart. Of course, we youngsters sat silent, looked and listened. The only thing I remember which was remarkable in Burns's manner, was the effect produced upon him by a print of

Bunbury's, representing a soldier lying dead on the snow, his dog sitting in misery on one side, on the other his widow, with a child in her arms. These lines were written beneath:

“Cold on Canadian hills, or Minden's plain,
Perhaps that mother wept her soldier slain;
Bent o'er her babe, her eye dissolved in dew,
The big drops mingling with the milk he drew,
Gave the sad presage of his future years,
The child of misery baptized in tears.”

Burns seemed much affected by the print, or rather by the ideas which it suggested to his mind. He actually shed tears. He asked whose the lines were; and it chanced that nobody but myself remembered that they occur in a half-forgotten poem of Langhorne's, called by the unpromising title of “The Justice of Peace.” I whispered my information to a friend present; he mentioned it to Burns, who rewarded me with a look and a word, which, though of mere civility, I then received and still recollect with very great pleasure.

His person was strong and robust; his manners rustic, not clownish; a sort of dignified plainness and simplicity, which received part of its effect perhaps from one's knowledge of his extraordinary talents. His features are represented in Mr. Nasmyth's picture; but to me it conveys the idea that they are diminished, as if seen in perspective. I think his countenance was more massive than it looks in any of the portraits. I should have taken the poet, had I not known what he was, for a very sagacious country farmer of the old Scotch school, i. e., none of your modern agriculturists who keep laborers for their drudgery, but the wise good man who held his own plough. There was a strong expression of sense and shrewdness in all his lineaments; the eye, alone, I think, indicated the poetical character and temperament. It was large, and of a dark cast, which glowed, I say, literally

glowed, when he spoke with feeling or interest. *I never saw such another eye in a human head, though I have seen the most distinguished men of my time.* His conversation expressed perfect self-confidence, without the slightest presumption. Among the men who were the most learned of their time and country, he expressed himself with perfect firmness, but without the least intrusive forwardness; and when he differed in opinion, he did not hesitate to express it firmly, yet at the same time with modesty. I do not remember any part of his conversation distinctly enough to be quoted; nor did I ever see him again, except in the street, where he did not recognize me, as I could not expect he should. He was much caressed in Edinburgh; but, considering what literary emoluments have been since his day, the efforts made for his relief were extremely trifling.

I remember, on this occasion I mention, I thought Burns' acquaintance with English poetry was rather limited; and also that, having twenty times the abilities of Allan Ramsay and of Ferguson, he talked of them with too much humility as his models; there was doubtless national predilection in his estimate.

This is all I can tell you about Burns. I have only to add, that his dress corresponded with his manner. He was like a farmer dressed in his best to dine with the lord. I do not speak in *malam partem*, when I say, I never saw a man in company with his superiors in station or information more perfectly free from either the reality or the affectation of embarrassment. I was told, but did not observe it, that his address to females was extremely deferential, and always with a turn either to the pathetic or humorous, which engaged their attention particularly. I have heard the late Duchess of Gordon remark this—I do not know anything I can add to these recollections of forty years since."

Carlyle, in his Essay on Burns, hammers out these clannish chunks of praise or glinting censure:

"Burns came upon the world as a prodigy. He appears not only as a true poet, but one of the most considerable men of the eighteenth century.

Burns, impelled by the expansive movements of his own irrepressible soul, struggled forward into the general view and with haughty modesty lays down before us the fruit of his labor, a gift, which Time has now pronounced imperishable.

We love Burns and we pity him; and love and pity are prone to magnify.

Burns was often advised to write a tragedy, but through life he enacted a tragedy.

A true poet, a man in whose heart resides some affluence of Wisdom, some tone of the 'Eternal Melodies,' is the most precious gift that can be bestowed on a generation.

How the heart of Burns flows out in sympathy over universal nature and in her bleakest provinces discerns a beauty and a meaning.

The voice of the tempest becomes an anthem to his ears.

Poverty is the companion of Burns, and also Love and Courage.

The Peasant Poet bears himself like a king in exile; he is cast among the low and feels himself equal to the highest.

In his abasement, in his extreme need, he forgets not for a moment the majesty of Poetry and manhood.

His understanding saw through the hollowness of accomplished deceivers.

A soul, like an Æolian harp, in whose strings the vulgar wind, as it passed through them, changed itself into articulate melody.

The writings he has left us are but brief, broken glimpses of a genius that could never show itself complete.

The excellence of Burns, whether in prose or poetry, is recognized in his *sincerity* and indisputable air of truth.

We recollect no poet of Burns' susceptibility who comes before us, from the first, and abides with us to the last, with such a total want of affectation. He is an honest man and an honest writer.

The poet is a pioneer and seer, with a gift of vision to read man and nature.

Burns shows himself a poet of Nature's own making, and Nature is still the grand agent in making poets.

Every true poet is born *in* the world, and sees it, with or against his will, every day and every hour he lives.

A Scottish peasant's life was the meanest and rudest of all lives, till Burns became a poet in it, and a poet of it, and found it a *man's* life, and therefore significant to men.

A virtue as of green fields and mountain breezes dwells in the poetry of Burns, and is redolent of natural life and hardy natural men.

He melts the heart or inflames it with a power which seems habitual and familiar to him.

No poet of any age or nation is more graphic than Burns!

In the poetry of Burns keenness of insight keeps pace with keenness of feeling. He is a man of the most impassioned temper, with passions not strong only, but noble, and of the sort in which virtues and great poems take their rise.

Burns, indeed, lives in sympathy, his soul rushes forth into all realms of being, and nothing that has existence can be indifferent to him.

A full flood of mirth rolls through the mind of Burns; he rises to the high and stoops to the low, and is brother and playmate to all Nature.

Tam O'Shanter is a mere drunken phantasmagoria, or a many-colored spectrum, painted on ale-house vapors.

The most poetical of all his poems is *The Jolly Beggars*, thoroughly compacted, melted together, refined and poured forth in one flood of true *liquid* harmony.

The songs of Burns are the best that Britain has yet produced. We rank him as the first of all our song writers.

The poetic work of Burns is broken off in the middle, almost in the beginning, and rises among us, beautiful and sad, at once unfinished and a ruin!

Burns could not gird himself up for any worthy, well calculated goal, but swerves to and fro, between passionate hope and remorseful disappointment.

Burns' appearance among the sages and nobles of Edinburgh must be regarded as one of the most singular phenomena in modern literature.

By the great Burns is treated in the customary fashion, entertained at their tables and dismissed; certain portions of pudding and praise are gladly exchanged for the fascination of his presence, which exchange once effected, the bargain is finished and each party goes his several way.

The failure of Burns was not eternal but internal, the bankruptcy of the soul.

Burns boasted of the "Rock of Independence," which is but an air-castle after all. There was a hollowness at the heart of his life, for his conscience did not approve what he was doing.

His later life lost its unity; his character before the world begins to suffer, calumny is busy with him, for a miserable man makes more enemies than friends!

The Dumfries Aristocracy had partly withdrawn themselves from Burns, as from a tainted person, no longer worthy of their acquaintance.

What harmony was in him, what music even in his discords!
He knew the right from the wrong as well as any man
ever did.

At last the gate of death was opened to him, and he passed,
not softly, but speedily into that still country, where the
hail storms and fire showers do not reach, and the heaviest
laden wayfarer at length lays down his load!

Many a poet has been poorer than Burns, but no one was
ever prouder.

The world, seems to us, treated him with more rather than
with less kindness than it usually shows to such men.

Burns was nothing wholly, and Burns could be nothing,
no man formed as he was can be anything, but halves.

His morality, in most of its practical points, is that of a
mere worldly man.

Burns has no religion! He lives in darkness and in the
shadow of doubt.

Burns was a born poet and poetry was the celestial ele-
ment of his being and should have been the soul of his whole
endeavors.

A true poet is not one whom the world can hire for money
or flattery. His hoofs are of fire and his path is through the
heavens, bringing light to all lands.

With men of right feeling anywhere, we are not required
to plead for Burns. With pitying admiration he lies en-
shrined in all our hearts.

Burns was of Nature's own and most cunning workman-
ship, bursting from the depths of the earth with a full gush-
ing current, into the light of day; and often will the traveler
turn aside to drink of its clear waters and muse among its
rocks and pines!"

The following epitaph of Burns to the memory of his
father might be properly inscribed on his own tombstone:

“O ye, whose cheek the tear of pity stains,
Draw near with pious reverence and attend;
Here lie the loving husband's dear remains,
The tender father and the generous friend,
The pitying heart that felt for human woe;
The dauntless heart that feared no human pride;
The friend of man, to vice alone a foe;
'For even his failings leaned to virtue's side!' ”

Many years ago when the late Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll visited the cottage birth-place of Burns, he sat in the poet's chair and impulsively composed the following tribute to the Scotch Bard, which is displayed on the walls of the building today:

BURNS.

Though Scotland boasts a thousand names
Of patriot, king and peer,
The noblest, grandest of them all
Was loved and cradled here.
Here lived the gentle, peasant prince,
The loving Cotter's King,
Compared with whom the greatest lord
Is but a titled thing.

'Tis but a cot roofed in with straw,
A hovel made of clay;
One door shuts out the snow and storm
One window greets the day.
And yet I stand within this room
And hold all thrones in scorn,
For here beneath this lowly thatch
Love's sweetest bard was born.

Within this hallowed hut I feel
Like one who clasps a shrine,
When the glad lips at last have touched
The something deemed Divine,

And here the world through all the years,
As long as day returns,
The tribute of its love and tears
Will pay to ROBERT BURNS!

DUMFRIES SOCIABILITY. SONG COMPOSITION.
DECAY AND DEATH.

The move of Burns from his farm to the enticing haunts of Dumfries threw him into a set of day and night associates, who used his talking and acting genius for their selfish amusements.

He was a willing victim for their applause at every banquet board and seemed delighted when playing the "monkey" to their whirling circus of dance and song.

The mind and body of Burns mingled naturally with the scenes and environments of the lowly, and although his soul-lit muse would occasionally rise from the clods of the valley into the sunshine of graceful intellectuality, his battered wings would be often trailed in the gutter of sensuous degradation.

Singing, dancing and drinking among the peasantry in the age in which Burns lived was as common and open as the brooks and rivers of Caledonia; and even the so-called gentry thought it the height of excellence and manhood to drink their companions under the table!

And thus Burns, catching the spirit of the times, exclaims:

"John Barleycorn was a hero bold,
Of noble enterprise,
For if you do but taste his blood,
'Twill make your courage rise.

'Twill make a man forget his woe,
'Twill heighten all his joy,
'Twill make the widow's heart to sing
Though the tear were in her eye.

Then let us toast John Barleycorn,
Each man a glass in hand,
And may his great posterity
Never fail in old Scotland!"

In the summer of 1793, Burns and Mr. Syme of the Excise Board made an excursion into the wild region of Galloway, and visited St. Mary's Isle, the romantic home of the Earl of Selkirk. It was on this trip that he composed his great war song, "Scots Who Have for Wallace Bled," inspired by the patriotic recollection of Bruce and the Battle of Bannockburn.

He remained all night at the castle of the old Earl, and delighted the daughters of his host by reciting and singing his own songs, assisted by the great Italian musician, Urbani.

Burns could be very agreeable when the mood of hope, love and ambition prevailed, forgetting in the glory of the muses the misery of his worldly situation, giving pleasure to all who came under the spell of his magnetic nature.

It was a great pity, and a great mistake, of the British government, in allowing this glorious child of song to be tortured daily in mind and body, as to how and where to get the necessities of life for himself and family.

Thousands of royal pets were on the civil pension list, who never could give to the honor of old Albion what this Scotch genius did in his songs and poetic philosophy; and just because Burns loved liberty, equality and justice, Dundas, Pitt and King George, tyrant Tories, allowed this great son of Democracy to pine in poverty and die in nameless laceration of soul and body!

When not engaged in traveling and gauging whiskey, Burns took pleasure in composing songs for Thompson's Museum of Music, and in a letter to this gentleman he gives this manner and habit of composition:

"My way is—I consider the poetic sentiment corresponding to my idea of the musical expression, then choose my theme, begin one stanza; when that is composed, which is generally the most difficult part of the business, I walk out, sit down now and then, look out for objects in nature around me that are in unison and harmony with the cogitations of my fancy and workings of my bosom; humming every now and then the air with the verses I have framed. When I feel my Muse beginning to jade, I retire to the solitary fireside of my study and there commit my effusions to paper, swinging at intervals on the hind legs of my elbow chair, by way of calling forth my own critical strictures as my pen goes on."

Allan Cunningham says, Burns had three favorite musing walks along the banks of Nith, where he could be secluded, and look over the distant hills and romantic towers of Lincluden Castle, listening to the rush of the river, as in twilight, autumn hours, he spun silver threads of song that still vibrate through the hearts of mankind.

When Burns returned to his cot, after these twilight compositions, he repeated them to his beautiful and faithful wife, who would sing over the words and tunes he dictated, aiding him in perfecting the mystic melodies of his fevered brain.

Burns says, when he wished to compose a love song, he put himself upon a diet of "admiring a beautiful woman!"

He must have been in that mood when he composed the serenade to

MARY MORISON.

O Mary, at thy window be,
It is the wished, the trysted hour!

Those smiles and glances let me see,
That make the miser's treasure poor.
How blithely would I bide the storm,
A weary slave from sun to sun,
Could I the rich reward secure—
The lovely Mary Morison!

Last evening when to trembling string
The dance tripped through the lighted hall,
To thee my fancy took its wing;
I sat, but neither heard nor saw;
Though this was fair, and that was fine,
And yon the toast of all the town,
I sighed, and said among them all,—
Ye are no Mary Morison!

O Mary, canst thou wreck his peace,
Who for thy sake would gladly die,
Or canst thou break that heart of his,
Whose only fault is loving thee?
If love for love you will not give,
At least be pity to me shown,
A thought ungentle cannot be
The thought of Mary Morison.

Burns not only had a ready knack of composing love songs, but his patriotic soul divined the sentiment of the heroic soldier, wounded and dying on the battlefield.—

SONG OF DEATH.

“Farewell, thou fair day, thou green earth and ye skies,
Now gay with the bright setting sun!
Farewell, loves and friendships, ye dear tender ties,
Our race of existence is run!

Thou grim king of terrors, thou life's gloomy foe,
Go, frighten the coward and slave;

Go teach them to tremble, fell tyrant! but know
No terrors hast thou to the brave!

Thou strikest the dull peasant, he sinks in the dark,
Nor saves even the wreck of a name;
Thou strikest the young hero, a glorious mark,
He falls in the blaze of his fame!

In the field of proud honor, our swords in our hands
Our cause and our country to save—
While victory shines on life's last ebbing sands,
Oh! who would not rest with the brave!"

In one of the despairing, groaning moments of Burns, when
spurred by the ghost of memory, he dashed off this poem:—

TO MARY IN HEAVEN.

"Thou lingering star with lessening ray,
Thou lovest to greet the early morn,
Again thou usherest in the day
My Mary from my soul was torn.

O Mary! dear departed shade!
Where is thy place of blissful rest?
See'st thou thy lover lowly laid?
Hearest thou the groans that rend his breast!

That sacred hour can I forget,
Can I forget the hallowed grave,
Where by the winding Ayr we met
To live one day of parting love!

Eternity will not efface
Those records dear of transports past;
Thy image at our last embrace,
Ah! little thought we, 'twas our last!

Ayr gurgling, kissed his pebbled shore,
O'erhung with wild woods' thickening green;

The fragrant birch and hawthorn hoar
Twined amorous round the raptured scene.

The flowers sprang wanton to be prest,
The birds sang love on every spray,
Till too, too soon, the glowing west
Proclaimed the speed of winged day.

Still o'er these scenes my memory wakes,
And fondly broods with wiser care!
Time but the impression deeper makes
As streams their channels deeper wear."

During the last three years of his life around the taverns, streets, roads, fields and forests of Dumfries, Burns took part in the political wranglings among the contending parties, and when under the influence of the wine-cup, with jovial companions, gave free vent to his liberal, and even it is said, revolutionary opinions.

As he held his small office under the Tory government, it was not strange that during the election campaigns his words of independence were tortured by Dumfries' Tory politicians into a case of disloyalty against the government.

Burns had a great habit of boasting of his "rock of independence," when even half starved in his wandering way for a precarious living. His poetic theory was all right, but—

Independence without money
Is a frail and broken reed,
For a bee without its honey
Will soon die for want of feed!

To the charges of personal and official disloyalty, Burns wrote the following letter in his own defense to the Excise Board:

"The partiality of my countrymen has brought me forward

as a man of genius, and has given me a character to support. In the poet I have avowed manly and independent sentiments, which I hope have been found in the man.

Reason of no less weight than the support of a wife and children have pointed out my present occupation as the only eligible line of life within my reach. Still my honest fame is my dearest concern, and a thousand times have I trembled at the idea of the degrading epithets that malice or misrepresentation may affix to my name.

Often in blasting anticipation have I listened to some future hackney scribbler, with the heavy malice of savage stupidity, exulting by asserting that Burns, notwithstanding the *Fanfarannade* of independence to be found in his works, and after having been held up to public view, and to public estimation, as a man of some genius, yet quite destitute of resources within himself to support his borrowed dignity, dwindled into a paltry exciseman and slunk out the rest of his insignificant existence in the meanest of pursuits among the lowest of mankind.

In your illustrious hands, sir, permit me to lodge my strong disavowal and defiance of such slanderous falsehoods. Burns was a poor man from his birth and an exciseman from necessity; but, I will say it! the sterling of his honest worth, poverty could not debase, and his independent Scotch spirit oppression might bend, but could not subdue!"

The manly independence spoken of in this letter was no doubt the cause of the refusal of official promotion for Burns, and it is even a wonder that the Tory administration allowed him to retain the small place of a common whiskey gauger.

Dire necessity alone caused him to seek the humiliating occupation, and the cry of a wife and three children often prevented his proud soul from flinging to the dogs of scandal this lean bone of patronage!

It seems cruel, in the plan of Dame Nature, that she gives to the poet, above all her other children, the great gift of soul poetry, and at the same time takes from him the sense of any financial wisdom, leaving him a beautiful wreck on the shores of commercial failure!

Poor Burns never knew the trick
That Wealth can turn without a flaw,
And with the aid of cunning courts
May smile and rob within the law!

Through the summer and fall of 1795, Burns found his physical powers in gradual decay, and with the pangs of indigestion, headache, fever, rheumatism, fainting spells and sleeplessness, he often went out in the evening among the "boys" of Dumfries, to seek solace in social conversation and forgetfulness in the flowing bowl of Bacchus.

Constant worldly cares, combined with remorse and disappointment in not receiving official promotion, lent speed to his zigzag journey to the tomb.

Through the winter and spring of 1796, a settled gloom pervaded his usual brave spirit, and he was scarcely able to attend to his gauging duty about the taverns and whiskey stores of Dumfries.

A tremulous gait and pale countenance characterized his movements about the town, and his personal friends advised him to drop all work and go to the sea shore for recuperation and relief.

The flowers and birds of May brought Burns no consolation, and even the mystic Muse seldom paid a visit to his lonely life.

Yet as love inspired his first song—"HANDSOME NELL"—so love inspired his last song, composed a few weeks before he died, to the early remembrance of Charlotte Hamilton:

"FAIREST MAID ON DEVON BANKS."

Full well thou knowest I love thee dear,
Could thou to malice lend an ear,
Oh, did not love exclaim—"Forbear,"
Nor use a faithful lover so?

CHORUS:

Fairest Maid on Devon Banks,
Crystal Devon, winding Devon,
Wilt thou lay that frown aside,
And smile as thou were wont to do?

Then come, thou fairest of the fair,
Those wonted smiles, O, let me share,
And by thy beauteous self I swear,
No love but thine my heart shall know!

And this last wail for love was from the soul of a Poet on the verge of the grave, tortured by physical and mental pains, with a family in dire poverty!

Inconsistency! thou art a Poet!

A few months before he died, Burns wrote the following noble letter to his old Edinburgh friend, Alexander Cunningham:

"Canst thou minister to a mind diseased? Canst thou speak peace and rest to a soul tossed on a sea of troubles, without one friendly star to guide her course, and dreading that the next surge may overwhelm her?"

Of late, a number of domestic vexations and some pecuniary share in the ruin of these times, losses which, though trifling, were what I could ill bear, have so irritated me, that my feelings at times could only be envied by a reprobate spirit listening to the sentence that dooms it to perdition.

Are you deep in the language of consolation? I have

exhausted in reflection every topic of comfort. A heart at ease would have been charmed with my sentiments and reasonings, but as to myself, I was like Judas Iscariot preaching the gospel. Still there are two great pillars that bear us up amid the wreck of misfortune and misery. The one is composed of a certain noble, stubborn something in man, known by the names of Courage, Fortitude, Magnanimity. The other is made up of those feelings and sentiments which, however the sceptic may deny them, or the enthusiast may disfigure them, are yet, I am convinced, original and component parts of the human soul, those senses of the mind—if I may be allowed the expression—which connect us with and link to those awful obscure realities—an all-powerful and equally beneficent God, and a world to come, beyond death and the grave!

The first gives the nerve of combat, while a ray of hope beams on the field; the last pours the balm of comfort into the wounds which time can never cure!"

In the winter of 1795 and 1796, Burns' mind ran on the rocks of despair, and although he had been temporarily promoted to the place of acting supervisor, his bodily ailments of indigestion and acute rheumatism undermined his whole constitution and run him into remorseful fits of dejection and complaint.

He unburdens his mind to Mrs. Dunlop in this fashion:

"What a transient business is life! Very lately I was a boy; but the other day I was a young man; and already I begin to feel the rigid fibre and stiffening joints of old age coming fast over my frame. With all the follies of youth, and, I fear a few vices of manhood, still I congratulate myself on having had, in early days, religion strongly impressed on my mind."

In January, 1796, Burns, with all his physical ills, could

not resist the temptation of attending a jovial party at the Globe Tavern, and in going home about two o'clock in the morning, stumbled and fell asleep for awhile, and when someone aroused him, the chill of the open air had penetrated to his bones and put another nail in the coffin of his blasted hopes.

On the 31st of January, 1796, he writes again to his never failing friend, Mrs. Dunlop:

"I have lately drunk deep of the cup of affliction. The autumn robbed me of my only daughter and darling child, and that at a distance, too, and so rapidly as to put it out of my power to pay the last duties to her. I had scarcely begun to recover from that shock, when I became myself the victim of a most severe rheumatic fever, and long the die spun doubtful; until after many weeks of a sick bed, it seems to have turned up life, and I am beginning to crawl across my room, and once indeed have been before my own door in the street."

Just before Burns wrote his last love song to Charlotte Hamilton, he composed the following to Jessie Lewers, his faithful housekeeper and nurse of himself and family:

MY QUEEN.

"Oh! wert thou in the cold blast,
On yonder lea, on yonder lea,
My plaidie to the angry air
Would shelter thee, would shelter thee;
Or did misfortune's bitter storms
Around thee blow, around thee blow,
Thy shield should be my bosom
To share it all, to share it all.

Or were I in the wildest waste,
So bleak and bare, so bleak and bare,

The desert were a paradise,
If thou wert there, if thou wert there;
Or were I monarch of the globe,
With thee to reign, with thee to reign,
The brightest jewel in my crown
Would be my queen, would be my queen."

Burns was certainly profuse and promiscuous in lavishing his love songs on a variety of the female kind, and whether the bonnie belles came from the lowlands of the heather wilds, or castle halls of the highlands, made no difference, for he imagined *all* women fascinating, entrancing and beautiful! Just like a romantic poet!

On the 4th of July, 1796, in a physical and mental dilapidation, he wrote thus to Johnson, the music publisher of Edinburgh:

"Many a merry meeting your music museum has given us, and possibly it may give us more, though, alas! I fear not. This protracting slow, consuming illness will, I doubt much, my ever dear friend, arrest my sun before he has reached his middle career, and will turn over this poet to far more important concerns than studying the brilliancy of wit or the pathos of poetic sentiments."

On the day he wrote these lines he left Dumfries for the village of Brow, on the Solway shore, to try the effect of sea-bathing; and he went alone to this last resort for expected relief. His faithful wife did not accompany the poet, for she was nearing the days of confinement for a new heir to the Burns intellectual estate!

Mrs. Walter Riddel, his farmer friend, happened to be summering at Brow for her health, and when she learned that Burns was there, she sent her carriage to bring him to her house for dinner and a social chat. She says, in an interview about the poet, "I was struck with his appearance

on entering the room. The stamp of death was imprinted on his features. He seemed already touching the brink of eternity. His first salutation was, 'Well, Madam, have you any commands for the other world?' I replied, that it seemed a doubtful case which of us should be there soonest, and that I hoped he would yet live to write my epitaph. He looked in my face with an air of great kindness and expressed his concern at seeing me look so ill, with his accustomed sensibilities.

"We had a long and serious conversation about his present situation and the approaching termination of all his earthly prospects. He spoke of his death without any of the ostentation of philosophy, but with firmness as well as feeling, as an event likely to happen very soon, and which gave him concern chiefly from leaving his four children so young and unprotected, and his wife hourly expecting a fifth. He mentioned with seeming pride and satisfaction the promising genius of his eldest son, and the flattering marks of approbation he had received from his teachers, and dwelt particularly on his hopes of that boy's future conduct and merit.

His anxiety for his family seemed to hang heavy on him, and the more perhaps from the reflection that he had not done them all the justice he was so well qualified to do.

Passing from this subject, he showed great concern about the care of his literary fame and particularly the publication of his posthumous works. He said he was well aware that his death would create some noise and that every scrap of his writing would be revived against him to the injury of his future reputation; that his letters and verses, written with unguarded and improper freedom, and which he earnestly wished to have buried in oblivion, would be handed about by idle vanity or malevolence, when no dread of his resent-

ment would restrain them, or prevent the censures of shrill-tongued malice, or the insidious sarcasms of envy, from pouring forth all their venom to blast his fame.

He lamented that he had written many epigrams on persons against whom he entertained no enmity, and whose characters he would be sorry to wound; and many indifferent practical pieces, which he feared would now, with all their imperfections on their head, be thrust upon the world. On this occasion he deeply regretted having deferred to put his papers in a state of arrangement, as he was now incapable of the exertion.

I had seldom seen his mind greater or more collected. There was frequently a considerable degree of vivacity in his sallies, and they would probably have had a greater share, had not the concern and dejection, I could not disguise, damped the spirit of pleasantry he seemed not unwilling to indulge.

We parted on the evening of the 5th of July, 1796; the next day I saw him again, and we parted to meet no more!"

This is a sad and mournful picture of the physical and mental condition of the great ploughman poet, as the ebbing tide of life was rapidly bearing him away over the ocean of years, into the unfathomable gulf of eternity!

Burns lingered about Brow and the bathing shore two weeks longer, and harassed about pressing debts and current expenses. Life became more miserable day by day, like the rise and fall of a fading candle light, flickering into final darkness.

He wrote to several of his friends for financial assistance, and among his notes we find the following to Mr. Thompson, the music publisher, dated the 12th of July, 1796:

"After all my boasted independence, cursed necessity compels me to implore you for five pounds.

A cruel scoundrel of a haberdasher, to whom I owe an account, taking it into his head that I am dying, has commenced a process, and will infallibly put me in jail.

Do, for God's sake, send that sum, and that by return of post. Forgive me this earnestness, but the horrors of a jail have made me half distracted. I do not ask all this gratuitously, for, upon returning health, I hereby promise and engage to furnish you with five pounds worth of the neatest song-genius you have seen!"

On the same day Burns wrote to Mr. Thompson for aid, he wrote to Mr. James Burnes of Montrose, his relative, asking for a loan of ten pounds, which was sent at once.

He wrote also, the same day, to Mrs. Dunlop, his last letter to that lady:

He says: "I have written you so often, without receiving any answer that I would not trouble you again but for the circumstance in which I am. An illness which has hung about me, in all probability will speedily send me beyond that 'bourne from whence no traveler returns.' Your friendship, with which for many years you honored me, was a friendship dearest to my soul. Your conversation, and especially your correspondence, were at once highly entertaining and instructive.

With what pleasure did I break open the seal! The remembrance yet adds one pulse more to my poor palpitating heart! Farewell!"

The night before leaving Brow for his desolate home in Dumfries, he took tea with Mrs. Craig, the widow of the minister of Ruthwell. His altered appearance created silent sympathy at the tea table, and Miss Craig, the daughter of the host, thinking the evening sun-light too much for the poet, rose to let down the window blinds, when he looked at the young lady benignly and said: "Thank you, my dear,

for your kind attention; but oh! let the sun shine, he will not shine long for me!"

On the 18th of July, Burns left Brow on his return to Dumfries, in a small spring cart.

When he arrived at his own door, the neighbors saw that he could hardly stand on his feet, and with tottering steps was helped into the house.

The news soon spread through the town, that Burns had returned home in a dying condition, and every one seemed to mourn for his situation as a family bereavement.

Allan Cunningham, who was present at the Burns cot, says:

"The anxiety of the people, high and low, was very great. Wherever two or three were together, their talk was of Burns, and of him alone. They spoke of his history, of his person, and of his works; of his witty sayings, and sarcastic replies, and of his too early fate; with much enthusiasm, and sometimes with deep feeling. All that he had done and all that they had hoped he would accomplish, were talked of.

Half a dozen of the people stopped Dr. Maxwell in the street, and would say: 'How is Burns, sir?' He shook his head, saying, 'He cannot be worse,' and passed on, to be subjected to similar inquiries along the street. I heard one of a group inquire with much simplicity, 'Who do you think will be our poet now?'

He tried to keep up his spirit, by humorous remarks on his death bed, and said to one of his brother volunteers, 'John, don't let the awkward squad fire over me!'

His sick wife was unable to move from her bed, and his four children wandered around the room like lost kittens in a garret. But Jessie Lewars was there to see to his dying wants and superintend his household." ■

On the evening of the 21st of July, 1796, as the warm

sunset beams flashed over the Scotch fields, streams and blooming hills, Burns, with his four children by his bedside, fell into an eternal sleep, and his troubled spirit passed into the silent halls of death!

The news of the death of Burns flashed over Scotland as if a forest fire roared his departure, or the alarm fire bells of night rung over a silent city!

The young, old, poor and rich, mourned for the early death of such a gifted man, and they found their great loss when too late to minister to his daily wants.

A fund was started for the relief of his wife and children, and a great public funeral turned out to accompany the crumbling remains of the poet to a lonely corner of St. Michael's churchyard.

His poor body was removed a couple of times for the vanity of those who put up monuments to a genius in death and starve him in life!

No poet ever lived whose heart beat closer to the pulsations of old Mother Earth than Burns, and none ever sung more delightful melodies for the glory of his native land!

He has, by his poetry and songs, lifted the cold, canny, imperturbable Scot out of his shilling reason and elevated him, in all climes, into the warm and festive citizen of to-day.

The peasantry of the fields and hills of Scotland, as well as the working men in mines, mills and sea-faring avocations, owe an everlasting debt of gratitude to the ploughman poet, for teaching them how to hold up their heads into the sunlight of personal liberty, and have the bravery to demand equal rights and justice for *all* Scotchmen!

The pampered scholars and professors of Edinburgh and Glasgow; sacerdotal agents, and the lords of the mountains and the isles, never did anything practical for the common people of Caledonia, until the torch of poetic liberty was

flashed in their startled faces by the bold and brilliant Burns.

He showed that a king, prince, duke, earl or lord, was no more in the eyes of God and nature, than the poorest peasant at the plough or the wheel; and when Death knocked at the doors of the rich and powerful, they left all their golden store and could not take a dollar away:

THERE'S NO POCKET IN A SHROUD!

You must leave your many millions,
And the gay and festive crowd,
Though you roll in royal billions,
There's no pocket in a shroud!

Whether pauper, prince or peasant,
Whether young, or old, or proud,
Remember that there isn't
Any pocket in a shroud!

You'll have all this world of glory,
With a record long and loud,
And a name in fame and story,
But no pocket in your shroud!

So, be generous with your riches,
Neither vain, nor cold, nor proud,
And you'll gain the golden niches
In the clime without a cloud!

CONCLUSION.

Robert Burns will be a theme for literary contemplation to the last syllable of recorded time!

Measured by money he was a failure, but measured by

mind he was a magnificent success. He had principle without policy, pride without arrogance, and wisdom without vanity.

Truth and sincerity were the foundation stones of his character and love was the lightning that shot across the murky atmosphere of his soul, and even purified the poverty and sordid elements that surrounded him in the rustic wilds of Caledonia.

We deplore his sins and sorrows; yet secretly sympathize and forgive his impulsive eccentricities, as we expect forgiveness for our own cunning cupidity and hypocritical words and actions.

The honest and intense humanity of Burns is what made him famous in his day, and will continue to make him great adown the circling centuries.

His personal peculiarities with women, wine and song, were not half as culpable as the so-called divine actions of Noah, David and Solomon, and yet these biblical birds are honored in the religious temples of to-day, as models of so-called divine virtue!

The temptations and seductions of a poet are numerous and constant, by the wiles of Venus and Bacchus, and greater ones than poor Burns, like Homer, Horace, Dante, Tasso, Petrarch, Shakespeare, Byron, and Edgar Allan Poe, fell before the entertaining allurements of female beauty and the intoxicating pleasures of the wine cup!

It is hard for the practical, financial, business part of mankind to appreciate a poet, for while people are delving in the ditches of golden expectation and realization, he is soaring aloft into the realm of the ideal, sporting with the muses of the soul and extracting melodies from the heaven of beauty, to illuminate and glorify the homes and halls of the whole human race.

Take away from the world to-day all the precious emblems of poetry, music, painting and sculpture, that we have inherited from our ancestors for ten thousand years, and there will be nothing left but a crude world of vulgarity and a wilderness of ignorance.

The genuine poet is a rare creature, and Nature seems slow and stingy in breeding these ethereal and divine children, who flash through the rolling world like a lone meteor or comet in the night of brutal endeavor, leaving behind them the bright flowers of melodious eloquence and philosophy, to thrill the hearts and souls of even the coldest brood of humanity.

The intense love, truthful tongue and sorrowing soul of the poet are the very elements of his personal misfortunes, and while the world blames him when living, for his lack of economy, policy and his sensuous eccentricities, it glorifies him in death, and reads his love-lit lays with enthusiastic admiration.

Burns boosted the brotherhood of man, and leveled down the rough ridges of aristocracy into the highway of Democracy, where the plain people had a voice in electing the representatives who made the laws. His poetry and philosophy work for the liberty, equality and fraternity of all mankind, spreading the cement of hope, love and truth over the cracks in the rough ashlers of life.

From the days of Burke, Grattan, O'Connell, Bright and Gladstone, no British statesman ever did more for the freedom of the common people, than the splendid philosophy in the poetry of the ploughman poet, and so long as contention and force and right and wrong exist in the world between the rich and poor, the powerful and the weak, we never can forget the wise epigram that—"A man is a man for all that!"

BURNS.

From pure and honest blood he sprung
And by great Nature soared and sung
His love-lit lays of hope and joy
Without a grain of base alloy.
His blood was of the Highland clan
Who toiled for freedom of the *Man*
Above all rank and power or gold—
To bless the young and bless the old
With liberty of thought and word
As free as any forest bird,
To wing their way both day and night
For home and love and peace and right.
Directly from the earth he came
To shine and write and win a name
For Freedom and her brilliant train
That moves along o'er mount and plain,
Imperial in her onward sway
To gild the glory of the day!
He sung of love and home and truth
For thoughtful age and rushing youth,
And Independence loud and long
Emblazoned in his rustic song,
Teaching the poorest of our race
That each should have an equal place
To think and work for daily bread
And with sweet labor forge ahead!
He loved the glory of his land
Where Bruce and Wallace nobly stand
For all that Freedom ever gave
To thrill the soul or gild the grave
Of heroes who have bled and died
As martyrs for their country's pride.
He spurned the crimes of lords and kings
Who, constantly on royal wings,
Inflate their colors to the breeze
And rob and kill o'er land and seas
To glorify their selfish deeds
As putrid as the poison weeds.

At cottage fire or banquet hall
His wisdom words astonished all,
And when he soared in ringing song
He magnetized the startled throng
Who listened with attentive ear
And gave applause and willing cheer
To Burns and his mystic might
Who ruled the pleasures of the night.
His words found echo from the throne
That wondered at their freedom tone
Resounding o'er the hills of Ayr
Reminding tyrants everywhere—
In home, in hall, in church and state—
That to be good is to be great!
His songs are sung around the world
And like a flashing meteor hurled
Their light of love illumines the night
With beauty, honor, faith and right
For all who do the best they can
And dearly love their fellow man!
Though poor in pounds his soul was rich,
And while he delved in field or ditch
The "Muses Nine" enthralled his heart
And ever took the peasant's part,
Who shone amid the glare of Wealth
And twisted pride and secret stealth
To listen to the man of glee
Who lived for love and liberty,
While they must plod for power and pelf
And rot in concentrated self!
He sunk his plummet in the sea
Of human hearts so deep and free,
And drew from out their throbbing life
The elements of joy and strife
And pictured in his simple song
The love of right and hate of wrong.
The blooming daisy pure and white
He glorified with words of light
And mourned its fall before the share

That tossed its body through the air
And left the drooping flower to die
Beneath the sod and sunny sky,
No more to greet the coming day,
Or bathe its face in dewy spray.
Age after age shall roll away
And nations crumble to decay,
Leaving no record of their life
Except their monuments of strife
Where kings and queens went down to dust
With little hope and little trust
To light them o'er the gathering gloom
That settles on their broken tomb
Where mice and lizzards now hold sway,
Through starlit night or garish day.
But Burns, the glorious ploughman-bard,
Though here on earth ill-used, ill-starved,
Shall shine adown the circling years
Among his greatest poet peers
Who worked with hand and heart and soul
To glorify and knit the whole
Of all mankind for truth and love—
Exemplified in heaven above!



Your Boetic Friend
John A. Joyce

